British foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq how their Salafi-Jihadist narratives are communicated

Regan, Aisling

Awarding institution:
King's College London

British Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: How Their Salafi-Jihadist Narratives Are Communicated

AISLING REGAN

Submitted for the degree of MPhil at the School of Security Studies
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON
30 September 2018

CONTENTS

Abstract

What factors contribute to a British citizen undertaking to travel to Syria and or Iraq and engage in violent actions? This is a perennial question for researchers, academics, security and intelligence personnel and there is no one answer that can encapsulate the complexity of the question. But, there is a perspective that suggests narratives play an important role in changing the attitude, beliefs, and intentions that can culminate in travel to the conflict zone for extremist purposes.

This project examines narratives, how they are different to stories, and identifies their constituent parts in detail. It argues that a narrative is a very persuasive means of communication, especially a master narrative which is distinguished by its robustness and how deeply embedded it is in a particular culture. Using content posted on Twitter, analysing research conducted by academics and think tanks, and capitalising on social media content featured in news media, this project demonstrates how some British foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq communicate a Salafist-Jihadist ideology through narrative means.[1] The veracity of their religious commitment is difficult to qualify but notwithstanding this, evidence suggests they do espouse this strict literalist interpretation of Islam.

This thesis examines radicalisation and the range of push and pull factors which are then articulated in a narrative context. It outlines how the *Ummah* has become a potent global, albeit imagined, community and how this forms just one of the pull factors that young British Muslims may experience. A large body of commentary exists as to the role of Salafist-Jihadist ideology as another pull factor and both sides of the argument are outlined with the evidence weighing in favour of it playing an important part. Why some individuals come to be in Syria and Iraq in the first place is attributable to a range of push factors, with identity being cited as critical in some of the literature. This project examines the veracity of this claim amid a confluence of factors such as (perceived) grievance, relative deprivation and group membership.

[1] For the purposes of this project, I have adopted David Malet's definition of a foreign fighter as 'non-citizens of conflict states who join insurgencies during civil conflicts' from David Malet *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conflicts*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) p.9.

Acknowledgements

From the period 2012-2017, I was an Intelligence Officer in the Irish Army, with specific responsibility for International Counter Terrorism (ICT). When I commenced working on the ICT desk, Europe still had one eye on the Libyan crisis and for Ireland, having a large Libyan diaspora, this had been the focus of much intelligence gathering efforts in the preceding years. However, the other eye was firmly fixed on Syria and had been since late 2011.

The seed was sown for this project during a deployment as the Irish National Intelligence Cell team leader in the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Mission in 2013-2014. I would frequently travel through the villages in South Lebanon which were known to have strong support for Hizb'Allah such as Marun ar'Ras, Ayta Chaab, Bint Jbeil (all considered flashpoints for those familiar with the 2006 Israeli invasion of South Lebanon) and observe increasing numbers of glossy, professionally designed, purposefully placed martyr posters.[2]

[2] The image displayed was taken from an article by Philip Smith entitled "Hizballah Cavalcade: Hizballah's Multiplying Qusayr Martyrs" *Jihadology,* available at https://jihadology.net/2013/05/20/hizballah-cavalcade-hizballahs-multiplying-qusayr-martyrs/ (last accessed 29 May 2018).

In the six months I was there my team tracked the numbers of local Hizb'Allah fighters killed in Syria and partially, the collection involved monitoring these posters on drives through villages. Such visible reminders of Shia Muslim martyrdom were thought-provoking and forced reflection on why would a British citizen chose to travel to Syria and opt to partake in violence against civilians and was it really for the sake of a religious ideology? Hizb'Allah's involvement was far more complex and a reflection of strategic alliances and state sponsorship of the hybrid terrorist organisation. By the time I had travelled to Lebanon in 2013, we already knew of Irish citizens who had departed Ireland for Syria. With a different environment and focus from the more routine ICT work as it pertained to Ireland's national security allowed me to begin to critically ask the 'why' as opposed to the 'how' questions concerning motivations for foreign terrorist fighter's travel that being a front-line intelligence officer required. The choice to examine Great Britain as opposed to Ireland was informed by two factors; 1) choosing Ireland would have created a direct conflict of interest with my employment at the time and 2) there was a much greater public interest in Great Britain correlated with a large number of citizens who had chosen the path and therefore a greater dearth of information available to analyse.

Throughout my entire career and academic journey my family have been a constant source of motivation and support, without which I certainly would not be where I am today. My primary supervisor Frank Foley who plucked me from the hat, and who undoubtedly must have felt during the last four years that he drew the short straw! Consistent in guidance and constructive feedback coupled with patience and motivation at crucial junctures, I consider myself extremely fortunate to have had Frank as a supervisor. To Peter Neumann, whose own research provided much of the analysis for this project, it was an honour to have had Peter as my second supervisor, his comments and suggestions were invaluable. Finally, to my future husband, and best friend, whose support, encouragement and patience has been the rails that kept this train moving…together we made this happen.

Introduction

As the Syrian civil war evolved into an armed insurrection security and terrorism experts, assisted by open source information, became alarmed at the number of foreign fighters travelling to Syria and Iraq. While foreign fighters are not new, the conflict in Syria and Iraq has mobilised the largest number to date.[3] Coinciding with the exponential increase and influence of social media applications and platforms, Syria and Iraq became the "five star jihad" locations for British foreign fighters.[4]

Many analyses of the foreign fighter phenomenon have referred to "narratives" and how there has been a pervasive "terrorist narrative" that was targeting European Muslims and swaying them toward a particular course of action. This project aims to critically examine the role of narratives in the mobilisation of British foreign fighters. Several hypotheses form the basis of this project and are as follows: *the internet has impacted on the radicalisation process, and made it easier to access terrorist content; certain elements of the young male British Muslim population are experiencing an identity crises; the Ummah is a powerful concept which can provide a collective "us" identity and; social media facilitated the dispersion of a Salafist-Jihadist ideology through a narrative framework.*

In reviewing the relevant literature for this thesis, it was discovered there is little specifically on the topic of terrorist narratives. Historically, and across the spectrums of social sciences there exists large quantities of research conducted on why and how people become terrorists, but this is not the primary objective of this project. The correlation between terrorism and narratives is a relatively new area dominated by policy papers and commentary that more routinely assume a reactive stance to a specific incident or are highly subjective opinion pieces intended to influence policy, rather than systematic and empirically based research.

---

[3] Lorenzo Vidino, "European Foreign Fighters in Syria: Dynamics and Responses" *European View*, *13*:2 (2014), pp 217–224.

[4] Jytte Klausen, "Tweeting the *Jihad*: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 38:1 (2015), pp. 1-22.

The existing research drawn upon in this thesis can be divided into four main strands; the theory of narratives; social identity theory; ideology; and radicalisation theory. The central focus of this research project cannot be addressed by confining oneself to the field of terrorism and security studies and therefore, this review of relevant literature and theory draws on other disciplines primarily sociology and in particular contemporary social theory, communication studies and the field of social psychology.

While acknowledging the mutual interdependence between these four themes, I have divided them into three separate categories for the sake of clarity. The first two chapters establish the conceptual framework of the thesis, drawing on a range of literature relevant to narratives and radicalisation. Chapter 1 will examine the literature regarding narratives and their use in terrorist communications. This is the foundational block for this project and the chapter will outline how a Salafist-Jihadist master narrative comprises the setting, the participants, the challenge and the outcome. Chapter 2 addresses radicalisation and the issue of terrorist use of new media particularly Twitter. The empirical analysis of the thesis is offered in the remaining three chapters. Chapter 3 addresses the role of ideology, specifically the Salafist-Jihadist strand and how this has morphed over time in response to global events for the most part. Chapter 4 features a deep-dive on the *Ummah* and its role in attracting foreigners to make *Hijrah* to Syria. Chapter 5 illustrates the importance of social identity theory in examining the mobilisation of British Muslims travelling abroad for extremist purposes. The conclusion summarises the findings of previous chapters and discusses the implications of them.

British Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq: A Primer

The historical perspective on foreign fighters is crucial to understanding their engagement in Syria and Iraq. While much public commentary from 2013 took the position that the large-scale movement of people to a conflict-zone beyond their own borders was an entirely new phenomenon, academics and researchers argued otherwise. A seminal article by Thomas Hegghammer examined the historical engagement of foreign fighters in conflicts in the Muslim world since 1980, and

identified that between 10,000 and 30,000 individuals had inserted themselves into global conflicts since then.[5] The number of Britons estimated to have travelled to Syria and Iraq is 850, although the true number will never be known.[6]

Relying on academic and research reporting sources reveals the average individual profile to be between 18-30 years of age and of South Asian origin.[7] This is attributable to the fact that approximately two thirds of Muslims in Britain are identified as being of South Asian heritage.[8] This contrasts with the foreign fighters of France and Belgium whose origins are tied to their country's colonial pasts, North Africa predominantly. Pantucci's analysis from 2014 of social media featuring Britons in Syria concluded that London, Portsmouth, Brighton and Birmingham were the greatest feeder regions in the UK.[9] Pantucci identified links to serious criminality among Britain's community of fighters in Syria, which was also a feature of ICSR's analyses.[10] However, the profile of volunteer changed over the course of the conflict, specifically in the aftermath of ISIS creation of their de facto Islamic State when they began to search for experienced professionals to assist in the consolidation of their state-like features such as doctors and engineers. The first tranche or wave of Britons to travel to Syria were described as being motivated by humanitarian reasons.[11] ICSR's research also found recent connections to higher education as a feature of the British foreign fighter profile.[12] It is assessed that the majority of Britons joined ISIS, but that a presence was found in other fighting groups including

[5] Thomas Hegghammer, "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad" *International Security*, 35:3 (Winter 2010/11), pp. 53–94.
[6] BBC News "Who are Britain's Jihadists?" available at https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-32026985 (last accessed 23 May 2018).
[7] Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann (Eds.) "The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union Profiles, Threats & Policies", *ICCT*, April 2016, p.40.
[8] Ceri Peach, 'Britain's Muslim Population: an Overview', in *Tahir Abbas (Ed) Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure* (London: Zed Books, 2005) pp. 18–46, p.20.
[9] Raffaello Pantucci "The British Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria" *CTC Sentinel*, 7:5 (2014), pp.17-21.
[10] Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann and Claudia Brunner *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, ICSR, October 2016.
[11] Mary Anne Weaver "Her Majesty's Jihadists", *The New York Times*, available at https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/her-majestys-jihadists.html (last accessed 27 November 2016).
[12] Shiraz Maher "British Foreign Fighters in Syria", *ICSR*, available at https://icsr.info/2013/10/15/british-foreign-fighters-in-syria/ (last accessed August 2017).

Jabhat al-Nusra (al Qaeda's original official Syrian affiliate), Jund al-Aqsa and Katiba al-Mujajireen (the battalion of migrants).[13] The reason Britons ended up fighting alongside ISIS in the greatest numbers can be attributed to the fact that the more extreme groups were better resourced, fought harder, displayed more discipline, and attested to being better motivated.[14] This gives afforded them an advantage, both against government forces and when competing for recruits or territory with other rebel groups.

[13] Shiv Malik and Aisha Gani, "One British jihadi killed in Syria and Iraq every three weeks" available at https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/oct/24/british-jihadis-killed-syria-iraq (last accessed 24 October 2014).
[14] Richard Barrett *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, (New York: anThe Soufan Group, June 2014) p.10.

CHAPTER 1 - Methodology

Introduction

Arguably, Syria was the first conflict in which a significant number of British fighters documented their involvement in conflict in real-time. Therefore, social media represented an essential source of information and inspiration for them. This was a passion project driven by a personal desire to learn about the role of Salafist-Jihadist ideology in Western Europeans, specifically British, travelling to Syria and Iraq. The project utilized a combination of primary research methods and exploited documentary sources where available. What follows is a description of how material was accessed, the timescale that was involved and how ethical considerations were dealt with. Reference will also be made to the limitations of the research methods employed.

Twitter Data

I chose Twitter as the primary source owing to its popularity among the foreign fighter movement, the ability to view content without logging in, viewing content without the account holder's explicit awareness and the use of the hashtag function to indicate support for ideas or people beyond what can be contained within the original message. For this project I monitored Twitter accounts in real-time using a "listening in" account, and all of the Twitter content included was accessed without "following" anyone or was it obtained in a clandestine or misrepresentative manner. There was no contact that was accessed which required permission from its owners. This project was undertaken by an English-speaking person, it should be noted that there is a language and cultural bias because of the information available. The sample pool was limited to those which were displayed in the English language only, past experience with free services such as Google translate revealed a patchy at best service.

In order to mitigate against Twitter account closure or "take-downs" and the potential for broken or expired URLs from media articles I saved content as either "screenshots" or as a "pdf" documents using the existing software on a MacBook.

The comment, like and retweet function provided further datapoints for investigation. I monitored 9 Twitter accounts in total and my study did not employ any software or tools to conduct aggregation, visualisation or analysis, it was a manual process which impacted the number of primary sources collected and featured in this project.[15] In the majority of cases, these accounts surfaced through news stories, blogs, and reports released by law enforcement agencies and think tanks and academics who would repost or link to the primary data.

Retention of Data and Ethics

The data which I accessed for the purposes of this study is retained on the internal hard drive of my personal laptop which is password protected. In addition my files are also backed up to an external hard drive. None of the documentation is stored on servers in the cloud. There is no unique communications between any account monitored and myself given that there was no interaction on my part, my account was purely a listening-in one. On the basis of the primary research methodology being solely reliant on publicly available information, this project did not require pre-approval from the Ethics committee at King's College London.

Use of Secondary Research Material

Secondary documentation was crucial and the necessity to build on the information I was building from my own social media collection. This project leveraged heavily, existing published research by institutions and academic who had a greater dataset and ability to aggregate the data. I collected a vast number of reports by academic institutions, journal articles, book chapters and conference papers dating from January 2014. These reports further provided bibliographies, which specified other useful sources. During the data collection phase I also had access to SITE Intel which provided valuable analysis of social media content from Syria and Iraq.

I monitored British media outlets, from the tabloid *Daily Mail* to the broadsheet

[15] The primary accounts monitored are identified by their Twitter handle for ease of reference and include: @abuanasmujahid; @al_britani; @qawlu_sawarim; @al_britaniyaa; @jannamahtain; @shami_witness; @I_Jaman; @abu_hussain_al_britani; @abu_rahash_britani; @r_tawheed.

Times and their fervent interest in the topic produced plenty of research material. I retained articles which were important to this project in "pdf" format in a folder on my hard drive in the event that they became unavailable in the future. On occasion I broke from purely analysing data from Twitter, when my attention was drawn to a Facebook post from a third-party secondary source, such as a newspaper article. I was conscious of the conundrum that mainstream media's reliance on social media has dangers as well as benefits. Journalists with limited access on the ground rely heavily on online content, which makes verification quite challenging for a journalist on a deadline in the Syrian context and this reliance creates the real risk of some misleading, incorrect attribution making it into mass media. In order to try and mitigate this I also collected publications by think tanks, policy institutes and conference summaries which were invaluable given that many involved analysing primary material obtained through interactions with Britons who were fighting in Syria and Iraq.

Timeline

The study was undertaken officially in the Autumn of 2014 but Twitter data collection took place from May 2014 until March 2016. The conclusion time coincided with a phase when primary material in the English language became more difficult to access on Twitter. This was due to a number of factors including a restriction on fighter's access to internet connectivity, a recognition that their online activities made them easier to geolocate and target with air strikes (the case of Jihadi John for example), that their social media output was attributable and could re result in prosecution if they were to return home In relation to secondary sources, and a coordinated response by the social media companies to de-platform suspected foreign fighters. I continued to collate my primary research findings with published material until the summer of 2018. Academic research on the Syrian conflict is still being published in journals as material ordinarily takes longer to come to print. As the events in Syria were relatively recent when this project began, journal articles at that time dealing with the foreign fighter phenomenon specific the Syrian conflict were quite limited nevertheless those discussing the ideology of Salafism were helpful.

Limitations

At the time of undertaking, my employment in the Irish Army curtailed by ability to engage in primary field work. If circumstances were different, it would have been ideal to travel to the UK to collect data, preferably through semi-structured interviews, with those engaged in the monitoring of social media on a daily basis such as ICSR researchers and those charged with responding to the issue such as members of the Office for Security and Counter Terrorism.

Being a part-time, distance-learning student in full-time employment poses a trifecta of challenges, and I did not seek any funding on the basis that I was limited in my ability to engage with the academic community in King's College and the London area in general. This project was entirely self-funded. Being in full-time employment for the duration while it challenged my time management skills, it enabled a project of this depth and longevity to be completed. If I were a full-time funded student I would like to have considered following a similar path to Quintan Wiktorowicz and interview some of those who had returned to the UK from fighting in Syria and Iraq to ask them of their motivations and if at all possible collate their responses to in-person interviewing with their social media posts.

CHAPTER 2 – Narratives

Introduction

> But when the forbidden months have passed, then fight and slay the pagans [*mushrikin*] wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem [of war], but if they repent and establish prayers and practice charity, then open the way for them, for God is forgiving, merciful.[16]

Narrative theory features across the disciplines of social theory, communications studies and more recently security and terrorism studies. However, the definition and conceptual framework subsequently varies greatly. Both in terrorism research and counter-terrorism practitioner and policy-maker circles narratives are a popular term of late. Cristina Archetti asserts that interest in narratives originates predominantly post-9/11 with the increasing realisation that terrorism and counter-terrorism is not confined to the sphere of security and military dimensions. This assertion is reflective of the general mutation of counter-terrorism into the realms of communication, perceptions and persuasion following recognition that these elements are now fundamental to the response by state actors in particular.[17]

This chapter will examine narrative theory in depth distinguishing a narrative from a story and identifying the key components of the former. The idea of a master narrative will be introduced and how its transnational and embedded nature is what distinguishes it from a narrative. I will debate how a narrative can affect a person's attitudes or beliefs and balance that with individual agency within sociological theory. It concludes with a discussion of the concept of transportation into the narrative world – a concept which provides insights into how narratives can facilitate the consumer to be translocated into the fictional world where the (master) narrative wishes to bring you.

---

[16] Qur'an, surah 9, verse 5 known as the "Verse of the Sword", this is the most quoted surah by Islamist extremists according to research conducted by Jeffrey R. Halverson, R. Bennett Furlow and Steven R. Corman *How Islamist Extremists Quote the Qur'an* (Arizona: Centre for Strategic Communication, 2012).

[17] Cristina Archetti, "Narrative Wars: Understanding Terrorism in the Era of Global Interconnectedness," in Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle (Eds) *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013).

What is a Narrative?

Although there are conceptual disagreements on what constitutes narrative, there are common definitional themes that, at the simplest level, state that narratives can be defined as the representation of an event or a series of events.[18] In general, researchers on this subject agree that narratives are story lines that explain events convincingly, express a sense of identity and belonging and from which inferences can be drawn.[19] The sense of identity feature of a narrative will be extrapolated upon in further sections but it can be surmised to suggest that narratives are the stories we tell ourselves and others about the world in which we live and are therefore fundamental to our identity.

Braddock and Horgan in their research on counter-narratives for violent extremism identified a narrative as 'any cohesive and coherent account of events with an identifiable beginning, middle, and end about characters engaged in actions that result in questions or conflicts for which answers or resolutions are provided'.[20] This is identified as the most comprehensive definition at present and will be adopted for the purpose of this project. It is their explicit identification of a narrative as providing a response, resolution or reaction impetus for the audience that is of relevance and their omission of the label story unlike Archetti that results in its selection.

The distinction between a narrative and a story is important to this thesis. Stories have been with us throughout the course of human history. They have been demonstrated to affect our emotional states[21], our belief systems[22], our behavioural

[18] H. Porter Abbott, *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[19] Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs* (London: Routledge, 2006) p. 22; David Betz, 'The Virtual Dimension of Contemporary Insurgency and Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 19:4 (2008) p. 515.

[20] Kurt Braddock and John Horgan "Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 39:5 (2016), pp.381-404, p383. See also Leslie J. Hinyard and Matthew W. Kreuter, "Using Narrative Communication as a Tool for Health Behavior Change: A Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical Overview", *Health Education and Behavior,* 34:5 (2007) p.778.

[21] Patrick C. Hogan, *The Mind and its Stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Keith Oately, "A Taxonomy of the Emotions of Literary Response and a Theory of Identification in Fictional Narrative" *Poetics,* 23 *(*1995), pp.53-74; Keith Oatley "Emotions and the Story Worlds of Fiction" in Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange and Timothy C.

patterns[23], and our responses to the world around us.[24] The term narrative is used liberally in public discourse and language but is often employed simply as a synonym for story or anecdote. Authors such as Halverson et al. and Bernardi et al. address this distinction succinctly.[25] They define a story as requiring the following dimensions 'time (sequence of events and actions); space (settings); representations (characters); and rhetoric (communication of an idea)', and a narrative as being a system of inter-related stories.[26]

Master Narratives

Mona Baker's research on narrative theory is cited widely in the literature for its comprehensive and critical evaluation of narrative types.[27] She identifies meta-narratives as 'particularly potent public narratives that persist over long periods of time and influence the lives of people across a wide range of settings'.[28] Pioneering research by Halverson et.al has revealed what they term a master narrative, defined as 'a transnational narrative which is deeply embedded in a particular culture'.[29]

Brock (Eds) *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erblaum, 2002) pp.39-69.

[22] Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 79, (2000) pp.401-421; Deborah A. Prentice, Richard A. Gerrig and Daniel A. Bailis "What Readers Bring to the Processing of Fictional Texts" *Psychonomic Bulletin Review,* 4, (1997), pp.416-420; S. Christian Wheeler, Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock "Fictional Narratives Change Beliefs: Replications of Prentice, Gerrig and Bailis (1997) with Mixed Corroboration", *Psychological Bulletin Review,* 6, (1999) pp.136-141.

[23] Leslie J. Hinyard and Matthew W. Kreuter, "Using Narrative Communication as a Tool for Health Behavior Change, pp.777-792.

[24] Jerome Bruner *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986); Michael F. Dahlstrom, "The Role of Causality in Information Acceptance in Narratives: An Example from Science Communication" *Communications Research* 37:6 (2010), pp.857-875; Sonya Dal Cin, Mark P. Zanna and Geoffrey T. Fong, "Narrative Persuasion and Overcoming Resistance" in Eric S. Knowles and Jay A. Lin (Eds.) *Resistance and Persuasion* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004) pp.175-192; Richard J. Gerrig, *Experiencing Narrative World: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993); Jeffrey J. Strange, "How Fictional Tales Wag Real-World Beliefs" in Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange and Timothy C. Brock (Eds) *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erblaum, 2002) pp.263-286.

[25] Daniel L. Bernardi, Pauline Hope Cheong, Chris Lundry and Scott W. Ruston, *Narrative Landmines: Rumors, Islamist Extremism and the Struggle for Strategic Influence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012).

[26] Daniel L. Bernardi et.al. *Narrative Landmines*, p.171.

[27] Mona Baker, *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (London: Routledge, 2006); Mona Baker, "Narratives of Terrorism and Security: 'Accurate', Translations, Suspicious Frames" *Critical Studies on Terrorism* 3:3 (2010), pp.347-364.

[28] Mona Baker, "Narratives of Terrorism and Security, p.351.

[29] Jeffrey R. Halverson et.al. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism,* p.24.

They hold that we connect events and new information to our understanding of existing narratives or master narratives and that a master narrative is a powerful resource for motivating action since it has immense resilience.[30] Their contention that a master narrative is distinctly different to a narrative is qualified by stating that the former is deeply embedded in a social system that is chronologically reproduced told again and again over time and extremely resistant to change. The level of influence a narrative can have is debated in more detail below but it is agreed with Archetti's assessment that 'the master narrative, or indeed any narrative is unlikely to be absorbed as it is but filtered and appropriated through the prism of the individual narrative'.[31] Freedman argues that a master narrative is expected to provide the audience with what is likely to happen and what actions they are supposed to take without having to be explicitly told.[32] This action facet of Freedman's work is of substantial significance to this thesis. Furthermore, Freedman observes that these narratives are strategic in that 'they do not arise spontaneously but are deliberately constructed or reinforced out of the ideas and thoughts that are already current'.[33]

Why are Narratives Important?

Hinyard and Kreuter posit that narratives are the principle method through which social entities like terrorist groups share information with and attempt to influence the public.[34] They are used to teach audience members what to think and may be particularly effective when used to discuss issues central to terrorist groups' positions, including morality, religion, personal and social values, and the meaning of life, for which reasoned or logical arguments are less effective.[35] As Freedman cautions, narratives 'are not necessarily analytical' and 'may rely on appeals to

[30] Jeffrey R. Halverson et.al. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* p.24.
[31] Archetti, "Narrative Wars", p.5.
[32] Jeffrey R. Halverson et.al. *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism* p.25; Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs* p.26
[33] Lawrence Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, p.22.
[34] Leslie J. Hinyard and Matthew W. Kreuter, "Using Narrative Communication as a Tool for Health Behavior Change, pp.777-792.
[35] George. S. Howard, "A Narrative Approach to Thinking, Cross-Cultural Psychology and Psychotherapy, 46:3 (1991) pp.187-197; Wendy Lutrell "Working-Class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race and Class"*Sociology of Education,* 62, (1989) pp.33-46; Donald E. Polkinghorne, *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (New York: New York Press, 1998).

emotion, or on suspect metaphors and dubious historical analogies'.[36] Narratives are argued to be easier to remember than non-narrative communication and have the potential to generate in us real and powerful emotions.[37] Furthermore because they commonly possess great persuasive potency, narratives are believed to be more difficult to resist, counter-argue, or refute.[38] According to Bernardi et.al. in the construction of a narrative, "truth" often becomes less about facts and evidence and more about coherence with pre-existing and prevailing understanding.[39] Baker is explicit in her assessment that in the construction of a narrative, some parts of the story are excluded and other parts are privileged, 'so as to make the story fit the lens through which narrative constructors would have others see the world'.[40]

A narrative's effectiveness is difficult to measure empirically, but much research has been conducted into narrative persuasion, albeit the topic has yielded a literature that is largely inconsistent. Some studies have found that exposure to a narrative affects an individual's beliefs and attitudes so as to align with the espoused viewpoints[41] while others have suggested that there is little evidence to account for the existence a relationship between narrative and persuasion at all.[42] One research study which involved examining thirty years of scholarship related to narratives and persuasion found 'exposure to a narrative is positively related to the adoption of narrative-consistent viewpoints...that narratives have the potential to persuade, independent of context'.[43]

---

[36] Freedman, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, p.23.

[37] Keith Oately "Emotions and the Story Worlds of Fiction" in Melanie C. Green et.al. *Narrative Impact*; Melanie C. Green, "Narratives and Cancer Communication", *Journal of Communication* 56 (2006), pp.163-183.

[38] Michael D. Slater, "Entertainment education and the persuasive impact of narratives" in Melanie C. Green et.al. *Narrative Impact,* pp. 157–182.

[39] Daniel L. Bernardi et.al. *Narrative Landmines,* p.171.

[40] Mona Baker, "Narratives of Terrorism and Security", p.352.

[41] Hyuhn-Suhck Bae (2008) "Entertainment-Education and Recruitment of Cornea Donors: The Role of Emotion and Issue Involvement" *Journal of Health Communication,* 13, (2008) pp.20-36; Hyuhn-Suhck Bae & Seok Kang "The Influence of Viewing an Entertainment-Education Program on Cornea Donation Intention: A Test of the Theory of Planned Behavior", *Health Communication*, 23, (2008) pp.87-95; Elissa Lee & Laura Leets "Persuasive storytelling by hate groups online: Examining its effects on adolescents", *American Behavioral Scientist,* 45, (2002) pp.927-957.

[42]Laura A. Peracchio and Joan Meyers-Levy "Evaluating Persuasion-Enhancing Techniques from a Resource-Matching Perspective" *Journal of Consumer Research,* 24:2 (1997) pp.178-191.

[43] Kurt Braddock, "The Utility of Narratives for Promoting Radicalization: The Case of the Animal Liberation Front," Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict 8 (2015), pp. 38–59; Kurt Braddock and

The Narrative of Foreign Fighters

According to the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, 'the messaging embedded in extremist products layers together a mix of ideological, political, moral, religious and social narratives, based on a range of real or imagined grievances'.[44] Briggs and Frenett exemplify this assertion as they identify three main narratives which are motivating foreign fighters to join conflict zones worldwide, and include humanitarian (example given is 'the brutality of the Regime'); ideological (the familiar 'Islam is under attack'); and identity (appealing to the social identity of a person by claiming 'this will make you a better person').[45] Islamist extremist narratives often tend to be told for specific political and ideological reasons: to educate Muslims about the repressive dangers of the West; to expose the prurient culture and colonist intentions of the West; and to inculcate Muslim's into the extremist's worldview.[46]

This project is concerned with the narrative of British foreign fighters and while the totality of those volunteers are undoubtedly dispersed within different groups it is generally accepted that they are concentrated in the largest numbers in ISIS. Although ISIS split from al Qaeda in 2013, their narrative has some commonalities with that of AQ given their core Salafi-Jihadi ideology. Schmid argues that AQ's ideology 'is expressed in its "single narrative"'.[47] This powerful 'meta-level narrative' is credited with transcending national and political boundaries while shifting attention towards the 'far enemy' in the form of the US and Europe.[48] Hegghammer has observed that foreign fighters in Syria are largely pursuing goals framed within a

---

James P. Dillard, "Meta-Analytic Evidence for the Persuasive Effect of Narratives on Beliefs, Attitudes, Intentions, and Behaviors," *Communication Monographs*, 83:4 (2016), pp.446-476.

[44] Institute for Strategic Dialogue *Review of Programs to Counter Narratives of Violent Extremism,* 2013.

[45] Rachel Briggs and Ross Frenett, 'Foreign Fighters, the Challenges of Counter-Narratives', *Institute of Strategic Dialogue*, available at http://www.strategicdialogue.org/Foreign_Fighters_paper_for_website_v0.6.pdf (last accessed 12 February 2017).

[46] Jeffry R. Halverson et.al., *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism.*

[47] See Alex P. Schmid, 'Al-Qaeda's "Single Narrative" and Attempts to Develop Counter-Narratives: The State of Knowledge', available at http://www.icct.nl/download/file/AP-Schmid-Al-Qaedas-Single-Narrative-January-2014.pdf (last accessed 10 April 2018).

[48] Change Institute, *Studies into Violent Radicalisation: Lot 2 – The Beliefs, Ideologies and Narratives,* 2008

religious conflict narrative and show little solidarity with the indigenous opposition's original goals.[49] According to Shapiro and Byman's commentary on Western European foreign fighters motivations to travel, religious rivalry drives most of the recruits.[50]

Therefore we can surmise that the narrative of ISIS rests on two main pillars which will be evinced in the proceeding chapters. These pillars provide justification for their very existence and their most heinous crimes, as without a supporting narrative, ISIS terrorist activity could be described as being merely reduced to random acts of violence. The first pillar draws on the claims that the West has subjugated Sunni Muslims who are "victims" of a global conspiracy and the Caliphate was founded to defend and protect Muslims in their fight back against Western dominance.[51] The second pillar reveals the religious supremacy of ISIS interpretation of Islam. As a result of this, ISIS establishes a totalitarian and tyrannical identity which separates humanity into "us" the authentic Muslims who are followers and defenders of the Caliphate and the "others" who are either infidels or apostates who deserve death if they fail to pledge allegiance to the Caliph Al-Baghdadi. The status as followers of ISIS and true Muslims is their single identity – no other strands of personality or identity is permissible.[52]

A narrative's primary function as evidenced in the above sections is to make sense of a body of data, whether it is a scene in a movie, a passage in a novel or the elements of information an individual collects about local, regional, or world events. What will follow in the immediate paragraphs is a critical analysis of the social construction of narratives as it is my contention, having conducted the initial review on narrative

[49] Thomas Hegghammer, "Syria's Foreign Fighters," *Foreign Policy*, available at http://mideastafrica.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2013/12/09/syrias_foreign_fighters (last accessed 18 September 2017).

[50] Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Homeward Bound? Don't Hype the Threat of Returning Jihadists" *Foreign Affairs*, 30 Sept 2014.

[51] Daan Weggemans, Edwin Bakker, and Peter Grol, "Who are They and Why do They Go? The Radicalisation and Preparatory Processes of Dutch Jihadist Foreign Fighters," *Perspectives on Terrorism,* 8:4 (2014), pp. 100–110; Edwin Bakker and Peter Grol, "Motives and Considerations of Potential Foreign Fighters from the Netherlands," *International Centre for Counter Terrorism (ICCT) Policy Brief* , July 2015.

[52] Alex Heck, "Images, Visions and Narrative Identity Formation of ISIS", *Global Discourse,* 7:2-3 (2017) pp.244-259, p.246.

theory, that much of the existing research on terrorist narratives fails to adequately account for the fact that narratives are central to the construction of identity. Through the lens of the competing functionalist approach versus the symbolic interaction paradigm, the importance of narratives will be examined.

The Role of Agency in Narratives

> Too often policymakers, communication strategists, and even social scientists assume that all texts are read and absorbed identically across a population. We know, however, that individual readers frequently produce meanings that are "outside the mainstream". Humanities scholarship has long recognised this individual agency and refers to the practice of producing an alternate interpretation as "reading against the text"[53]

Recalling the definition of meta-narratives according to Mona Baker as 'particularly potent public narratives that persist over long periods of time and influence the lives of people across a wide range of settings', it is the question of how persuasive a narrative can be which is important to this thesis.[54] Reviewing the relevant literature on narratives, it is essential to question agency and its role. Agency can be located according to two contrasting views: it is either a 'subject position' that is determined by dominant discourses and master narratives, or it embodies the self-creating (if not self-inventing) subject.

Archetti's research suggests an alternative understanding of the concept of narrative, one which is based on the notion that narratives are socially and relationally constructed rather than being merely scripted messages"'.[55] According to her, narratives are social products in two respects. First, a narrative does not exist independently from individual agency. Secondly, a narrative is a collective construction.[56] 'The problem of structure and agency has rightly come to be seen as the basic issue in modern social theory'.[57] Structure, the institution for example, is associated with "macro-sociology" and theories such as structural functionalism. Agency, the individual for instance, is more allied with "micro-sociology" and an

[53] Daniel L. Bernardi et.al., *Narrative Landmines,* p.22.
[54] Mona Baker, "Narratives of Terrorism and Security", p. 351.
[55] Cristina Archetti, "Narrative Wars", p.2.
[56] Christina Archetti "Narrative Wars", p.2.
[57] Margaret Archer, *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

example of such a theoretical framework is symbolic interactionism. The following sections will examine the concept of narratives from Archetti's viewpoint, examining their structural and "agentic" characteristics.

Agency and Structure: How Individuals Actively Create Meaning

Terrorism is a social activity driven by group dynamics as well as root causes and motivations. Individuals do things in groups that they would never do on their own.[58] Social ties do not just exist with people we are in contact with but are also indirect and articulated through a sense of belonging to imagined communities.[59] As Linde contends that 'individual's life story is not the property of that individual alone, but also belongs to others who have shared the events narrated – or were placed to have opinions about them'.[60]

Recalling some of the discussion on narrative definitions in the previous section, a facet is their collective nature, that they are powerful resources for motivating and are deeply embedded in a particular culture. Such assertions inspire the examination of narratives from a functionalist perspective. Criticism of functionalists generally, centre on their treatment of human behaviour as if it were merely the product of structural factors. Rather than taking a purely functionalist perspective, it is analytically useful to add an emphasis on the role of agency. Narratives, it has been demonstrated, can affect individual's perception of themselves, leading to temporary changes in self-concept, particularly when individuals identify with a character.[61] The individual has a place in the narrative process, agents adjust stories to fit their own identities, and they will tailor "reality" to fit their stories.[62]

[58] For more on this see Max Abrams "What Terrorists Really Want" *International Security* 32:4 (2008) pp. 78-105.
[59] Cristina Archetti "Narrative Wars", p.3.
[60] Charlotte Linde *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory* (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 2009) p.4.
[61] Marc Sestir and Melanie C. Green, "You are What You Watch: Identification and Transportation Effects on Temporary Self-Concept" *Social Influence* 54:3 (2010) pp.272-288.
[62] Margaret Somers "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A relational and network approach" *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994) p.618.

The recognition of individual agency in the reading of the narrative is discussed by Stuart Hall who argues that the interpretation of a narrative or its "decoding" does not follow prescriptively and a priori from the way the narrative is encoded.[63] This is referred to as the post-structural and cognitive constructivist model approach and allows for and gives a significant role to the decoding reader as well as the encoder storytellers.[64] Hall's and other post-structural approaches allow for a more subtle understanding of human agency, placing it squarely in the context of culture, social formation, and experience.[65]

In the theory of symbolic interactionism, personal agency is crucial as the individual is viewed as an active constructor of their own conduct who interprets, evaluate, define and map out their own action rather than as passive beings who are impinged upon by outside forces.[66] Herbert Blumer, believed theories such as structural functionalism 'ignored the crucial forces by which actors bestow the forces acting on them and their own behaviours with meaning'.[67] Blumer did not deny the existence of structure; what he decried is the overemphasis on the importance of structural matter in determining people's conduct.[68]

Somers' seminal work on the role of narratives in the constitution of identity highlighted that stories guide action, that people construct identities by locating themselves or being located within a repertoire of emplotted stories.[69] According to Bernardi et al. 'narratives marshal a range of common story elements that draw upon their readers' historical experiences to facilitate diverse interpretation. This is particularly the case, at least from a historical perspective, with religious narratives'.[70]

---

[63] Stuart Hall quoted in Bernardi et al. *Narrative Landmines,* p.22.
[64] Stuart Hall quoted in Bernardi et al. *Narrative Landmines,* p.22.
[65] Daniel L. Bernardi et al. *Narrative Landmines,* 23.
[66] Ruth A. Wallace and Alison Wolf *Contemporary Sociological Theory,* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2006) p.199.
[67] George Ritzer *Sociological Theory*, p.337.
[68] Ruth A. Wallace and Alison Wolf *Contemporary Sociological Theory,* p.222.
[69] Margaret Somers "The Narrative Constitution of Identity", p.614.
[70] Daniel L. Bernardi et al. *Narrative Landmines,* p.24.

Transportation into the Narrative World

Fischer proposed that narratives consist of 'symbolic actions – words and/or deeds – that have sequence and meaning for those who live, create or interpret them'.[71] For Fischer, narratives are not created or understood in isolation – their meaning is derived from the experiences of those who interact with them. This he referred to as "transportation into the narrative world" which fundamentally involves the self, and he believed may even change the self.[72] Green's research proposes that 'the phenomenological experience of becoming absorbed into a story, or transported into a narrative world, is the key mechanism underlying the influence of stories or narratives on individual's beliefs'.[73]

Busselle and Bilandzic argue that message recipients construct character models, story world models, and situation models to make sense of the events in the narrative. [74] They go on further to suggest that for an individual to comprehend a narrative message they must 'shift their focus from the actual world into the fictional world and situate themselves within the mental models they construct for the story'.[75] Green further contends that a transported individual is 'fully mentally engaged with the story, responds emotionally to it, and may experience vivid mental images of story events'.[76] This full engagement is suggested to affect individuals by relaxing the boundaries of the self, identifying with the characters and sympathising with them and characters and narrative events can provide blueprints for possible selves.[77] Such assertions are crucial to this thesis. The process of transportation – whereby individuals are carried away imaginatively into the narrative's world –

[71] Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1987) p.24.

[72] Walter R. Fisher, *Human Communication as Narration*, p.25.

[73] Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives" pp.401-421; Melanie C Green and Timothy C. Brock "In the Mind's Eye", in Melanie C. Green et.al. pp.315-341.

[74] Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic, "Measuring Narrative Engagement" *Media Psychology*, 12, (2009), pp.321-347.

[75] Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic, "Fictionality and Perceived Realism in Experiencing Stories: A Model of Narrative Comprehension and Engagement, *Communication Theory,* 18, (2008), pp.255-280, p.272.

[76] Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock "In the Mind's Eye", p.318.

[77] Abraham Tesser, Joanne V. Wood and Diederik A. Stapel (Eds) *On Building, Defending, and Regulating the Self: A Psychological Perspective* (New York: Psychology Press), p.71

appears to distinguish the processing of narrative from non-narrative communication.[78]

Green argued that psychological transportation, described as the 'process whereby all mental systems and capacities are focused on events in a narrative' can render that narrative more persuasive by circumventing traditional barriers to belief and attitude change. [79] And furthermore, Green suggests, this psychological transportation reduces counter-arguing against a persuasive message as message recipients are subsumed or caught up in the narrative and are not sufficiently motivated to critically evaluate the persuasive arguments contained therein.

Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated the component parts of a narrative and how they differ from a story. The prominent feature that will be captured in further chapters is how narratives are often less about truth and facts and more concerned about coherence and something that will be robust and convincing as it is reproduced. The preceding analysis highlighted how important a narrative can be in transportation somebody into the world in which the narrative is framed and how this can blur the lines between reality and the fictional world. The existing literature on narrative potency was exposed with the weight of the argument seeming to favour the position that narratives can have a significant role to play. The common components of narratives of foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq can be surmised as humanitarian, ideological and identity based and the latter two will be examined in greater detail in the proceeding chapters.

[78] Melanie C. Green and Timothy Brock "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives", pp.401-421.
[79] Melanie C. Green, Timothy C. Brock, and Geoff F. Kaufman, 'Understanding Media Enjoyment: The Role of Transportation into Narrative Worlds,' *Communication Theory*, 14:4 (2004), pp. 311–327.

CHAPTER 2 - Radicalisation and the Role of Social Media

Introduction

This dissertation argues that narratives are motivation for British Muslims to adopt a Salafist-Jihadist ideology and travel to Syria/Iraq where they engage in terrorist offences. Extrapolating on this argument requires a critical review of radicalisation, as the preceding chapter has highlighted the importance of narratives and their contribution to an individual becoming a foreign fighter, it is therefore imperative that this is examined within the broader conceptual framework of radicalisation. The examination of radicalisation will reveal the components that constituent the specific narratives of Salafist-Jihadist British fighters and the interrelated and appealing storylines which are part of the process. The increase in emphasis on radicalisation in news outlets and social media, who often use the terms “radical”, “radicalise” or “radicalisation” in a variety of ways without clarifying what is precisely meant, has turned the term into an all-encompassing concept assumed to reflect “how someone becomes bad”.

In attempting to understand the motivations to enter a conflict zone outside of one’s own country, conducting a critical analysis of radicalisation will assist this process. In conducting this review, it is not the intention to designate one particular model of radicalisation as superior to the others, nor is it to propose an entirely new model. Instead this chapter will begin with outlining the historical background to this relatively new concept and extrapolating on the existing body of research, outline three factors which are assessed as contributing to the radicalisation of individuals. It will be argued that social group dynamics coupled with identity are compounded by relative deprivation to contribute to the foreign fighter phenomenon, and the chapter will conclude with identifying how the internet and in particular social media facilitated the communication and dissemination of radicalisation. This chapter will not address the process of radicalisation per se, rather it will critically analyse existing research on radicalisation of foreign fighters and extract the pertinent issues for further examination.

Historical Underpinnings

Radicalisation is broadly accepted as a post-9/11 product and before then, most analyses were purely terrorism focused. For example, the most influential pre-9/11 academic study of the causes of terrorism is Martha Crenshaw's 1981 paper "the causes of terrorism". Her paper does not specifically focus on radicalisation, but reviewing it in today's context one can see the correlation between the root causes of terrorism and radicalisation through her defined factor of individual motivation and belief systems. While there is a diverse and multitudinous quantity of literature on radicalisation, the failure of the academic community to develop a consensus definition of the phenomenon is a significant obstacle. Many of the academic works are beset by limitations due to them not being empirically informed, or having strong methodological underpinnings.[80] What is called radicalisation in one discipline is often described as extremism or terrorism in another. Radicalisation according to Schmid

> is not just a socio-psychological scientific concept but also a political construct, introduced into the public and academic debate mainly by national security establishments faced with political Islam in general and Salafist Jihadism in particular.[81]

Cognisant of the contestations and challenges associated with definitions of radicalisation, this section will instead focus primarily on the process as an exposition of the variety of radicalisation definitions is beyond the ambit of this particular review. However, in order to proceed a number of definitional distinctions need to be clarified from the outset. I will adopt as a working definition of radicalisation that of McCauley and Moskalenko's, who contend that radicalisation is the development of beliefs, feelings, and actions in support of any group or cause in

[80] Alex P. Schmid "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review" (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, 2013); Randy Borum "Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4:4 (2011) pp.37-62; Andrew Silke "Research on Terrorism: A Review of the Impact of 9/11 and the Global War on Terrorism" in. Hsinchun Chen, Edna Reid, Joshua Sinai, Andrew Silke and Boaz Ganor (Eds.) *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security* (New York: Springer, 2008) pp.27-50.

[81] Alex P. Schmid "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation, p.19.

conflict.[82] They expand further to state that an extreme of radicalisation is terrorism, in which a non-state group targets not only government forces but civilian citizens supporting the government.[83] However it has a problematic relationship with radicalism, seen as the expression of legitimate political thought, which is still reflected in the titles of some political parties in Europe, and consequently can contribute to confusion. Radicalism as advocacy of, and commitment to, sweeping change and restructuring of political and social institutions has historically been associated with left- and right-wing political parties for example.[84] McCauley and Moskalenko's explanation of the radicalisation process is comprehensive and importantly, distinguishes and disentangles the movement of individuals and groups to legal and nonviolent political action (activism) or to illegal and violent political action (radicalism).[85]

The Spectrum of Radicalisation

While consensus may be difficult to find on the mechanisms and pathways towards radicalism, it would be remiss not to make reference to the notion that radicalisation leads to terrorism is fiercely contested in academic circles. According to John Horgan

> the idea that radicalisation causes terrorism is perhaps the biggest myth alive today in terrorism…[first], the overwhelming majority of people who hold radical beliefs do not engage in violence. And second, there is increasing evidence that people who engage in terrorism don't necessarily hold radical beliefs.[86]

This assertion by Horgan is widely accepted in academic circles and there is plenty of

---

[82] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) p.4.
[83] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko "Mechanisms of Political Radicalisation: Pathways Toward Terrorism" *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 20:3, (2008), pp.415-433.
[84] Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2012) p.3.
[85] Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko "Individual and Group Mechanisms of Radicalization" in L. Fenstermacher, L. Kuznar, T. Rieger & A. Speckhard(ed), *Topical Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) Multi-Agency and Air Force Research Laboratory Multi-Disciplinary White Papers in Support of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-WMD: Protecting the Homeland from International and Domestic Terrorism Threats: Current Multi-Disciplinary Perspective on Root Causes, The Role of Ideology, and Programs for Counter-Radicalization and Disengagement* (2010) pp.82-92.
[86] John Knefel "Everything You've Been Told About Radicalisation is Wrong" *Rolling Stone* available at https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/everything-youve-been-told-about-radicalization-is-wrong-80445/ (last accessed 6 May 2015).

evidence to support the thesis that not all (social) movements become radicalised or violent like ISIS.

One way to attempt to understand a person's pathway to joining a foreign fight is to use Tomas Precht's three-part motivational framework, developed to identify the factors influencing the radicalisation process of militant Islamists in Europe. The framework comprises three categories of influential factors. The first is "background factors," which includes personal struggles with identity (including religious identity), experiences with discrimination or injustice, needs for belonging, and lack of social integration. The second category Precht calls "trigger factors," and include people (such as a mentor or charismatic leader) and events (such as military or policy actions) that might provoke or incite either antipathy or activism. The third category is that of "opportunity factors," which account for an individual's degree of access and likelihood of exposure to the grievances behind the local conflict or people involved in that struggle within her or his sphere of activity. These include physical and virtual spaces such as the internet, religious institutions, and penal institutions.[87]

An empirical analysis conducted by Rand and Vasseko, based on social media, examined the reasons posted by people who traveled beyond their home borders to fight in Syria and Iraq which provide insight into the radicalisation process. Four prominent motivational themes emerged. First, they identified a belief that the fight to establish a Caliphate in the Levant and Iraq is part of a transnational larger struggle by Sunni Muslims against both the West and Shi'a Islam. Secondly, there is a belief that the fight in Syria is a defensive struggle by the *Ummah* against the corrupt and apostate Assad regime. Thirdly, there was a feeling of outrage at the humanitarian crises created and atrocities perpetrated by the regime and a perception that the West has failed to respond to the tragedy in Syria. Finally, people identified a desire to take part in what might be thought of as a form of adventure tourism.[88] Testifying to the US Senate in March 2010 Scott Atran stated that:

[87] Tomas Precht, Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalization in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defense, 2007).
[88] Dafna Rand and Anthony Vassalo, "Bringing the Fight Back Home: Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria," *Center for a New American Security* (2014), p. 2-3.

> Entry into the jihadi brotherhood is from the bottom up: from alienated and marginalized youth seeking out companionship, esteem, and meaning, but also the thrill of action, sense of empowerment, and glory in fighting the world's most powerful nation and army…Popular jihadi internet Imams, like Anwar al-Awalaki, are not important because they brainwash, command or even guide others to actions and targets. Rather, popular radical Imams serve as "attractors" whose message and presence draws into line a searching soul who has already pretty much chosen his own path.[89]

The concept of identity will be dealt with as a standalone chapter but the reasons of relative deprivation, social group dynamics and adventurism are worthy of brief mention.

Grievance and Relative Deprivation

In their article that attempts to consolidate theorising about the radicalisation of Western home-grown Jihadists, Michael King and Donald Taylor review what they describe as "five major models" of radicalisation.[90] In doing so they identify two commonalities that recur in the five reviewed models and other existing research that they preclude from their present discussion, they are relative deprivation and an identity crisis. According to them, individuals experience feelings of relative deprivation 'by comparing their material conditions to that of other groups, and viewing their group's disadvantage as an injustice'.[91] Both Assaf Moghaddam and Randy Borum's models of radicalisation place relative deprivation at the initial stages of the process. Engaging in terrorist activity is often cited as being a consequence of structural or individual alienation. Rik Coolsaet's study of the Jihadist scene in Belgium, cited the root causes of radicalisation to be mostly structural, 'high unemployment, marginalisation, discrimination and a sense of alienation from the wider society'.[92]

---

[89] Scott Atran, *Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities* (10 March 2010).
[90] Michael King and Donald M. Taylor "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:4, (2011) pp.602-622.
[91] Michael King and Donald M. Taylor "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists" p.609.
[92] Rik Coolsaet,"Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighters Wave," *Egmont Paper 81*, available at http://www.egmontinstitute.be/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/egmont.papers.81_onlineversie.pdf (last accessed 11 May 2016).

Social Group Dynamics

Byman and Shapiro's research on foreign fighters note that the decision to join a conflict is usually 'less an act of religious commitment than of young male rebellion and thirst for adventure'.[93] This finding is complimented by Donatella della Porta whose research (the majority of which focussed on left-wing terrorist groups) concluded that joining a violent group for thrill, money, or status does not require any political ideas or ideology.[94]

Wilson and Daly whose research examines the propensity for risk-taking and violence among young men have found that the thrill of operations that involve guns and money; and status and fame is unparalleled by the achievement of an ordinary life. Young men, in particular they argue, are susceptible to the appeal of these rewards as they transition from adolescence into young adulthood, trying to position themselves relative to their peers.[95] For these individuals, they contend, the ideology of the group they join matters less than the anticipation of thrill and status.[96]

An influential model of radicalisation has been the one of Quintan Wiktorowicz who, in 2005, introduced the notion of a "cognitive opening" as the moment when an individual who has perhaps been trying to make sense of his or her existence and 'suddenly sees the light', exchanging an old view of the world for one considered more true.[97] Put simply, as Wiktorowicz states, people 'rarely awake with a sudden taste for radicalism or an epiphany that drives them to support violence'.[98] Recalling the research by Dina al Raffie referred to in the previous section, she asserts that individuals becoming radicalised into a Salafist-Jihadist mindset involves creating the

[93] Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro, "Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq" *Foreign Policy at Brookings, Policy Paper Number 34* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute 2014) p.5.
[94] Donatella della Porta *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
[95] Margo Wilson and Martin Daly "Competitiveness, Risk-Taking and Violence: The Young Male Syndrome" *Ethology and Sociobiology,* 6, (1985), pp.59-73.
[96] Arnold P. Goldstein "Delinquent Gangs" in John Archer (Ed.) *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.87-105; Satoshi Kanasawa and Mary Still "Why Men Commit Crimes (and Why They Desist)" *Sociological Theory,* 18:3, (2000), pp.434-447.
[97] Quintan Wiktorowicz *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West,* (Maryland: Lowman and Littlefield, 2005).
[98] Quintan Wiktorowicz *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishing, 2005) p.85.

identity of a person which is based on a 'puritanical interpretation of Islam that imbues the individual with a sense of moral and spiritual superiority, setting him/her aside from the rest of society'. Therefore, this cognitive opening Wiktorowicz refers to is correlated and not mutually exclusive from this process of identity formation.

Summary

The radicalisation of individuals is a messy human affair, which cannot be attributed to one factor, but existing research has demonstrated there exists a number of contributing elements. Notwithstanding this, the majority are perceived as structural and bearing in mind the previous chapter, to suggest that individuals have no agency is to neglect a legitimate body of evidence that suggests this. Therefore, the prominence of identity in the debate resulted in it becoming a chapter of its own in this project. It is also evident from the research examined that a number of the issues which are cited as being triggers are global or transnational, such as the oppression of the West and the corrupt nature of certain Arab or Gulf regimes. For such events to be motivating I would argue that this information would be disseminated from certain sources through a persuasive or narrative context such as ISIS or al Qaeda. The means through which this propaganda can reach its intended audience is the subject of the second part of this chapter.

Terrorist Use of the Internet

Over the last 15-20 years, the radicalisation process has had an important online element. Indeed the permeation of internet communications into everyday lives has had a profound impact on every section of society. According to data from the Office for National Statistics in 2017, almost all adults (99%) aged 16 to 34 years were frequent internet users. While identifying the specific platforms and applications they use wasn't in scope of the afore-mentioned survey, it can be assumed that social media and social networking sites are particularly popular with this age bracket.[99] Notwithstanding the fact that there have been an unquantifiable number of positives outcomes from the dispersion of internet communications, there have

[99] Office for National Statistics "Internet Access – Households and Individuals 2015", Statistical Bulletin, 06 August 2015.

been negative unintended consequences too, as it has and continues to be utilised by nefarious actors.

There is a significant body of literature which holds that the internet has many benefits for international terrorists.[100] Though not exhaustive perhaps one of the most concise reviews is that of Maura Conway who noted that terrorists use the internet for reasons including information provision; financing; networking; recruitment and; information gathering.[101] Writing in 2006 Conway's analysis is as relevant today in spite of the developments in the international terrorism arena and simultaneously in internet-based communications. And arguably the arena that has been most utilised for terrorist actors is that of social media, after spending in excess of 15 years lurking in password-protected forums.

Social Media

Social media's effect on changing communications has become ubiquitous with the Arab Spring, but notably, the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, the 2009 Iran election protests, the 2013 Boston Bombing (and subsequent manhunt) and 2014 Westgate Mall attack, were events in which social media played a significant role in communication. The 2014 ICSR report "#Greenbirds" revealed a lot about the power of social media in the Syrian civil war. Using open-source information tools the researchers analysed their interests by looking at Facebook "likes" and Twitter "retweets" and mentions.[102] Their research has important implications for this study as it revealed how for those in Syria, how social media came to represent both an essential source of information and inspiration as they documented their activities and collective engagement in conflict in real time.[103] Writing in 2013, Prucha and

[100] See for example Gabriel Weimann *Terror on the Internet: the New Arena, The New Challenges* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2006); Brigitte Nacos *Mass-Mediated Terrorism: The Central Role of the Media in Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002); Philip Seib and Dana M. Janbeck *Global terrorism and New Media* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010).

[101] Maura Conway "Terrorism and the Internet: New Media, New Threat?" *Parliamentary Affairs,* 59:2 (2006) pp.1-30, p.2-19.

[102] Joseph Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter Neumann, #Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks, *ICSR,* 01 April 2014, p.9-12.

[103] Joseph Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter Neumann, #Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks, *ICSR,* 01 April 2014, p.29.

Fisher comment that the shift toward social media use for new generation Jihadists 'reflects to a great extent a specific *zeitgeist*, a contemporary as well as generational shift from texts and scripts to a "visual literacy"'.[104]

Social media is a prime medium for which to engage in self-presentation practices and behind the cover of a keyboard one can re-create their identity. In analysing the inter-connectedness of social media from a social movement and contemporary activism perspective, Paulo Gerbaudo asserts that the connections created with distant others 'run the risk of taking energy and time away from interactions based on physical proximity…this tendency of new media to engender dynamics of seclusion from local communities and the thickness of face-to-face networks is an aspect overlooked'. [105] This physical isolation but social interconnectedness phenomenon associated with social media is astutely noted by Sherry Turkle who surmises:

> alone with your thoughts, yet in contact with an almost intangible fantasy of the other, you feel free to play. At the screen you have a chance to write yourself into the person you want to be and to imagine others as you wish them to be, constructing them for your purposes. It is a seductive but dangerous habit of mind.[106]

This leads to the question just what is social about social media? Answering the rhetorical question, Christian Fuchs asserts that the answer lies in human agency.[107] The internet he defines '…is a techno-social system that comprises the social processes of cognition, communication and co-operation.[108] So while establishing that social media engages a person in the social aspect of communication, to what extent it becomes a substitute for physical interactions and communities is worthy of some discussion. Interaction thus plays an especially strong role in identity construction in a conversational medium such as Twitter, as followers will primarily

[104] Nico Prucha and Ali Fisher CTC Sentinel "Tweeting for the Caliphate: Twitter as the New Frontier for Jihadist Propaganda" 6:6 (2013) p.19-23.
[105] Paolo Gerbaudo *Tweets and the Streets: Social Media and Contemporary Activism* (London: Pluto Press, 2012) p.35.
[106] Sherry Turkle *Alone Together: Why we Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011) p.188.
[107] Christian Fuchs *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 2014) p.37.
[108] Christian Fuchs *Social Media: A Critical Introduction* (London: Sage, 2014) p.44.

draw conclusions based on the contents of tweet messages as well as indications of the intended recipients of those messages.[109]

Social Media as a Virtual Community

Kotkin states that 'by abolishing the need for face-to-face contact, the internet increases loneliness and social isolation, expanding virtual networks that lack the intimacy of real relationships nurtured by physical proximity'.[110] Rheingold posed the thesis that the popularity of online communities was 'a response to the hunger for community that has followed the disintegration of traditional communities'.[111] Michael R. Parks in his research assessed the status of online settings such as MySpace and Facebook as sites of virtual communities, seeking in particular to determine what conditions are necessary for the formation of communities.[112] He acknowledges the academic debate which pertains to defining what consuitutes a community, and highlights the more recent views of it as a 'culture, set of ideas and interpersonal sentiments tather than as a physical place'.[113] As a result of his study of MySpace, Parks concluded that

> …a group might qualify as a virtual community if its members engaged in collective action, shared in rituals, had a variety of relational linkages, and were emotionally bonded to others in a way that conferred a sense of belonging and group identification.[114]

Twitter – A Jihadi hub?

According to Barrett, Facebook is the dominant social medium in the Levant, while Twitter rules in the Gulf. ISIS posts in multiple languages to extend its reach unlike its competitor al Qaeda who tend to use Arabic on Twitter and Facebook.[115] The

[109] Dawn R. Gilpin "Working the Twittersphere: Microblogging as Professional Identity Construction" Zizi Papcharissi (Ed) *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Networking Sites,* (New York: Routledge, 2011) pp.232-250, p.234.
[110] Joel Kotkin *The New Geography: How the Digital Revolution is Shaping the American Landscape* (New York: Random House, 2000) p. 169.
[111] Howard Rheingold *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier,* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993) p.62.
[112] Malcolm R. Parks "Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities" in Zizi Papacharissi (ed) *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture of Social Network Sites,* (New York: Routledge, 2011) pp.105-123, p.105.
[113] Malcolm R. Parks "Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities" p.107.
[114] Malcolm R. Parks "Social Network Sites as Virtual Communities" p.117-118.
[115] Richard Barrett *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, (New York: The Soufan Group, June 2014) p.30.

importance given by Jihadist groups to Twitter was for example highlighted in the 11th issue of Inspire magazine released by AQAP (Yemen) in May 2013.[116] The Jihadist insurgents in Syria and Iraq use all manner of social media applications and file sharing platforms, most prominently Ask.fm, Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, PalTalk, kik, Viber, Telegram and Tumblr, 'but circumstances conspire to make Twitter the most popular application'.[117]

Twitter has simple yet powerful methods of connecting tweets to larger themes, specific people and groups that is a unique aspect of the medium. Specifically, tweets can be categorised by a "hashtag". Any word(s) preceded by a hashtag sign "#" are used in Twitter to note a subject, event, or association. Hashtags are an integral part of Twitter's ability to link the conversations of strangers together. The structure of communication via hashtags facilitates impromptu and rapid interactions of individuals (often strangers) into these conversations.[118] Unlike on most online social networking sites, such as Facebook or MySpace, on Twitter the relationship of following and being followed requires no reciprocation. A user can follow any other user, and the user being followed need not follow back.[119] Twitter assisted the activists of Syria to organise themselves and their demonstrations in March 2011 particularly when they created the hashtag "#march15" to associate with their so-called "day of rage".[120] The fact that users are assessed to be seeking more and more encryption and privacy, it is somewhat contrary that many Twitter users fighting with extremist groups such as ISIS appear more than content proselytising and utilising imagery to convey their message in an open and uninhibited fashion.[121]

---

[116] Inspire Magazine May 2013, issue 11, p.17 available at https://azelin.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/inspire-magazine-issue-11.pdf (last accessed 29 November 2017).
[117] Jytte Klausen "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 38:1 (2015), pp.1-22.
[118] Dhiraj Murthy *Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013) p.2.
[119] Haewoon Kwak, Changhyun Lee, Hosung Park & Sue Moon "What is Twitter, a Social Network or a News Media" *Proceedings of the 19th international conference on World wide web* (2010) pp.591-600.
[120] USIP "Syria's Socially Mediated War", 2014, p.7.
[121] RUSI *A Democratic License to Operate: Report of the Independent Surveillance Review* (RUSI: London, 15 July 2015) p13.

Twitter and ISIS

ISIS's sophistication with social media goes beyond mere usage. The group actively employs strategies to distort its online presence, make it appear more formidable, and drown out competing messages. One such technique is organised hashtag campaigns 'in which the group enlists hundreds and sometimes thousands of activists to repetitively tweet hashtags at certain times of day so that they trend on the social network'.[122] This approach has been successful, for example, in outperforming hashtags associated with al-Nusra Front, even though the groups have similar numbers of online supporters.[123]

ISIS made extensive use of Twitter according to US officials, operatives and supporters of the organisation produced up to 90,000 tweets every day. On Twitter, ISIS began using "official" propaganda accounts around August 2013[124] however, since the summer of 2014, as account suspensions crippled ISIS's networks, its social media strategy shifted from broadcasting information from accounts to utilising dedicated hashtags.[125] This, according to Charlie Winter, 'occurred out of necessity, rather than choice. Officially branded accounts made for easy targets for those with the power to suspend…'.[126]

A study's results published in 2015 found that ISIS supporters operated at least 46,000 independent Twitter accounts, with 200-500 of these accounts active all day, thereby helping to disseminate the organisation's propaganda.[127] In addition, the organisation developed an application for mobile devices called 'Dawn of Glad Tidings', which for a period of time was available for download in Google and Apple app stores and enabled its supporters to follow the organisation's activities in real time. Somewhat insidiously and equally cleverly, in downloading the application to

[122] J. M. Berger "How ISIS Games Twitter" *Atlantic,* 16 June 2014.
[123] J. M. Berger "How ISIS Games Twitter" *Atlantic,* 16 June 2014.
[124] Eric Schmitt, "U.S. intensifies Effort to Blunt ISIS' Message" *New York Times,* 16 February 2015.
[125] Nico Prucha, "Islamic State's Online-Mediated Ideological Narratives", public lecture at the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, London, 6 July 2015.
[126] Charlie Winter, "Documenting the Virtual Caliphate" *Quilliam Foundation,* October 2015, p.11.
[127] J.M. Berger and Jonathan Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter" *Brookings Institute Analysis Paper No. 20,* March 2015.

one's device, it allowed ISIS to take temporary control of the Twitter account of the said user and publish messages in his/her name. [128]

Twitter and Imagery

Aryn Baker has commented on ISIS's use of images and on the dangerous symbiotic relationship at play by stating that 'the ubiquity of camera phones and social media are enabling a mixture of propaganda, intimidation and boastful exhibitionism'.[129] Indeed research on imagery in media generally has indicated that humans process images more quickly than text, making images more emotionally visceral and responses to images frequently more immediate and powerful than responses to text.[130] Recalling Baker's statement, studies have documented that viewers react to disturbing images by becoming more fearful or anxious, by amplifying their perceptions of risk, and by adopting revised assessments of the consequences of what the image depicts.[131]

The basis for the visual image, vision itself, is biological and is therefore universal across cultures.[132] Veteran political media expert Doris Graber compliments this assertion by stating that images not only attract the attention of viewers, but they also expand the audience base for the messages of media campaigns.[133] Berger's research compliments this by finding that ISIS 'has been able to exert an outsized

[128] Adam Hoffman and Yoram Schweitzer "Cyber Jihad in the Service of the Islamic State" *Strategic Assessment,* 18:1, (2015) pp.71-81, p.73.
[129] Aryn Baker, "Savage Online Videos Fuel Syria's Descent into Madness", *Time* available at https://archive.li/PlUVA (last accessed 17 May 2017).
[130] Michael Pfau, Michael Haigh, Andreelyn Fifrick, Douglas Holl, Allison Tedesco, Jay Cope, David Nunnally, Amy Schiess, Donald Preston, Paul Roszkowski and Marlon Martin, "The Effects of Print News Photographs on the Casualties of War", *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly,* 83:1, (2006) pp.150-168.
[131] Montague Kern, Marion Just and Pippa Norris, "The Lessons of Framing Terrorism", Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (Eds.) *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public,* (New York: Routledge, 2003) pp.281-302; Leonie Huddy, Stanley Feldman, Gallya Lahav and Charles Taber, "Fear and Terrorism: Psychological Reactions to 9/11", Pippa Norris, Montague Kern, and Marion Just (Eds.) *Framing Terrorism: The News Media, the Government and the Public,* (New York: Routledge, 2003) pp.255-278; Joanne Cantor, "Fright Responses to Mass Media" Bryant Jennings and Dolf Zillman (eds.) *Responding to the Screen* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991) pp.169-198.
[132] Donald D. Hoffman, *Visual Intelligence: How We Create What we See,* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998).
[133] Doris A. Graber, "Say it With Pictures", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences,* 546, (1996), pp.85-96, p.86.

impact on how the world perceives it, by disseminating images of graphic violence…'.[134] The Soufan Group have highlighted how the social media of foreign fighters in which 'the image portrayed is welcoming and reassuring and address the fear of the unfamiliar, for example there are many postings of fighters with pet kittens'.[135]

McLuhan and Fiore contend that 'viewers focus on visual information because they see images as credible records, allowing them to "witness" news events even though they themselves were not physcially present'.[136] The theory of narratives highlighted previously detailed how they can have a transporting effect, and Twitter's ability to convey imagery makes this a potent combination for consumers.

Concluding Remarks

The reason for undertaking a review of radicalisation in this thesis was to briefly explain some of the factors that are said to contribute to a person leaving their own country to take up violent actions in another. The range of push and pull factors identified can be summarised as solidarity with other fellow Muslims abroad, alienation and social exclusion felt in Europe, and the search for excitement and adventure.[137] In every factor and every phase identified, online communications has had the potential to play an important role. Social media in particular provided a vehicle to convey a message to the masses that was previously unseen. The platforms facilitated short impactful statements to be communicated to an unquantifiable audience and also allowed imagery to be transmitted which as demonstrated in the preceding analysis can be more affective than words in certain circumstances. As previously demonstrated, research suggests that a narrative can have the effect of transporting the reader into the world from which it has

[134] J.M. Berger and Jonathan Morgan, "The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter" *Brookings Institute Analysis Paper No. 20,* March 2015, p.6.
[135] Richard Barrett *Foreign Fighters in Syria*, (New York: The Soufan Group, June 2014) p.17.
[136] Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects,* (New York: Bantam Books, 1967) p.117.
[137] Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann (Eds), *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*, (ICCT: The Hague, 2016).

constructed. Given the potency of imagery to a reader, this combination is deemed to amplify the persuasiveness of a narrative.

CHAPTER 3 - Ideology

Introduction

A fundamental question of this thesis is why young British Muslims, in an albeit small number of cases, travel for extremist purposes to Syria. While there is obviously no "one size fits all" explanation, there exists some common indicators. For a young (predominantly male) British Muslim to find their way to a battlefield in Raqqa or Mosul, a series of events must occur in what can be compared to a Swiss cheese model, in that all the holes must line up, and the irregularity of that represents the very rare instances of this happening as a percentage of the total community. It will be necessary in this chapter to examine the debate on whether or not religious ideology plays a key role in this journey. Subsequent chapters will then flesh out my empirical argument that Salafist-Jihadist ideology is extremely potent and when channelled through a narrative context, can have a persuasive effect.

This chapter proposes to tackle questions such as why medieval interpretations of a religious ideology still hold sway in some quarters today? How can they appeal to some people living in modern, liberal, western democratic societies such as Britain? I will commence with a brief examination of the concept of Salafism, the relationship with Wahhabism and will follow with a detailed analysis of the Salafist-Jihadist ideology, seeking to provide clarity on a subject where poorly defined terms have often plagued its study. It will be demonstrated that ideology is an important contributor to Salafi-Jihadist terrorism, though there are competing views on this. Finally I will conclude by examining how some British Muslims expound the Salafist-Jihadist ideology in their support for groups such as ISIS in Syria and Iraq.

Brief Context

Hall described ideology as 'the framework for thinking and calculations about the world—the "ideas" that people use to figure out how the social world works, what their place is in it, and what they ought to do'.[138] It is contended that a terrorist

[138] Stuart Hall, 'Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates,'

group's ideology is a set of ideas that the members adhere to and it is indoctrinated in its members in order to guide their activities and actions, while a narrative is a vehicle through which this ideology can be communicated. The concept of religiously motivated terrorism is relatively new, the study of which was pioneered by Bruce Hoffman but is foremost in academic research today.[139] But there exists significant difference in opinions on the role which ideology has played in mobilising people to conduct terrorist related activity.

The Salafi movement is a very diversified, complicated ideologically and religiously motivated trend and is thus not categorised by one unified discourse or group or authority for that matter.[140] For example a common statement often heard is that as a rule, all Wahhabis are Salafis, but not all Salafis are Wahhabis, which I will tease out in this chapter. Islamism is also another complex trend that includes a spectrum from moderate to radical movements, but it is not equivalent to Wahhabism: it is actually its antithesis. While Islamism, Wahhabism and Salafism share a few theological and intellectual doctrines, they are very different.[141] The proceeding paragraphs will lay the theological and ideological foundations for further discussion.

Political Islam, Islamism and the Muslim Brotherhood

The existence of Islam for almost 1,500 years demonstrates that the phenomenon today referred to as Islamism is a relatively recent addition. Peter Neumann surmises that the advent of political Islam and Islamism can be attributed to when Islam encountered modernity, particularly the west, as a consequence of the colonial era when the Islamic world's proud tradition of empires and caliphs was suppressed by large parts of the Muslim world being ruled by the West.[142] According to him 'for

---

Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 2:2 (1985), pp.91-114, p. 99.

[139] Bruce Hoffman "Holy Terror: The Implications of Terror Motivated by a Religious Imperative" (Washington DC: Rand Corporation, 1993) p.2.

[140] Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, (2006), pp.207-239.

[141] Ahmad Moussalli "Wahhabism, Salafism and Islamism: Who is the Enemy?" *Conflicts Forum Monograph,* January 2009, p.3.

[142] Peter Neumann *Radicalised: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016) p.35.

many Muslims, especially in the Arab world, the colonial era was a hard and humiliating experience that threw up many questions about their own identity'.[143]

This changed in the first half of the twentieth century with the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, which is arguably the most significant Muslim organisation in the world. The movement was founded in Egypt in 1928 by scholar Hasan al-Banna, at a time when British rule was most palpable and emerged in response to what it perceived as the rise of Western imperialism and the associated decline of Islam in public life, trends it sought to reverse via grassroots Islamic activism (*dar al-dawa*).[144] The group's mission was dedicated not just to ending colonialism, but to obtain control of the state and consequentially abolish the secular judicial system and introduce Sharia law.[145] The Brotherhood's exclusively Sunni membership does not make it callously hostile to other Islamic sects, such as Shi'ism, or Sufism, and it has never been as doctrinally rigorous as present-day Salafi-Jihadists.

Following a failed assassination attempt on the President Gamal Abdel Nasser, the Brotherhood was outlawed in January 1954 in a series of measures aimed to crackdown on Egypt's Islamists. It was during this period of repression that the movement's leader Sayyid Qutb spent 10 years in prison, penning his most influential book *Milestones Along the Way* during his incarceration.[146] Qutb argued that society had regressed to a state of ignorance associated with pre-Islamic times, a period known as *jahiliyya.*[147] By framing society in this way pan-Islamic ideologies offer a new sense of politically significant collective identity and created a form of nationalism. Qutb 'fundamentally recalibrated the way Islamists understood their relationship with the state'.[148] As society was in need of a complete overhaul radical *ideas* now became mainstreamed to combat and confront the state and however

[143] Peter Neumann *Radicalised* p.35.
[144] Cole Bunzel "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State" *Brookings Analysis Paper* 19, March 2015, p.7.
[145] Cole Bunzel "From Paper State to Caliphate"p.7; Peter Neumann *Radicalised* p.36.
[146] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2016) p.86-87.
[147] Marc Lynch "Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 33:6 (2010), pp.467-487, p.469.
[148] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.87.

spiritually focused the Brotherhood's activities initially were, as they mutated they resulted in conflict.[149]

The followers of Qutb, persecuted by Nasser, found sanctuary in Saudi Arabia, where Qutb's ideas and the locally predominant religious doctrine cross-pollinated each other in the following years.[150] Saudi Wahhabism is 'a particularly harsh form of Salafism' and the nature with which Wahhabism became popular in the eighteenth century (predominantly through punitive action and coercion) is indicative of how many of its followers conduct their affairs in the present day. Jihadism – and specifically Salafi-Jihadism – is a combination of Qutb's violent theory of revolution and Wahhabist religious doctrine.[151] The Brotherhood championed the restoration of the caliphate as the ideal system of government for the Islamic world, a popular theme in the earlier 20th century. The Saudi state's sponsorship of Salafism, particularly since they inherited their hydrocarbon wealth is a force-multiplier and attributable to the success of the permeation of the ideology abroad, particularly in Europe and the Balkan States.

Salafism (al-salafiyya): from "al-salaf al-salih" the pious predecessors

Salafism is commonly correlated with terrorism in the twenty-first century which is not only erroneous but deeply offensive to the majority of those Salafists who simply seek to live the most authentic life as a Muslim similar to those who were living with the Prophet or within living memory of him. Salafist Islam attempts to return to the Islam practiced by the Prophet, his companions, and the first generations of Muslims. Salafists range from 'liberal-progressives to conservative-reactionaries in three strands of Salafism: quietest; political Salafists and Salafist-Jihadists', and it should be noted that the majority of Salafis are quietist.[152]

The sources of Salafi ideology are the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the Hadith. Because of the ambiguity involved in translating Qur'anic verses into practice, particularly in

[149] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.87; Peter Neumann *Radicalised* p.36.
[150] Peter Neumann *Radicalised* p.37; Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.114-115.
[151] Peter Neumann *Radicalised* p.37
[152] Assaf Moghadam "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology" *CTC Sentinel*, 1:3 (2008) pp.5-7.

new contexts in the modern world, the Hadith have become critical in providing guidance. Salafi scholars must examine the life of the Prophet to extract model actions that transcend time and then apply these examples to the modern context. This is important to note, and while not uncommon in other religions, the fact that the Salafi ideology is largely conveyed through an interpretation of the Prophet's sayings introduces a degree of poetic license. This therefore lends itself perfect to enveloping in the communicative framework of narratives. There is much scope for personal interpretation around the central question of Salfi ideology, which can be summed up in the simple question 'what would the Prophet do if he were alive today?'[153]

Salafism disregards the centuries of innovation and development that took place in the middle ages and the early modern period. That position raises the fundamental issue of determining how Islam was practiced in the first generations, and how this can be reconciled with twenty-first century modernity.[154] The answer, in addition to the aforementioned matter of religious certainty, can be found in Salafism's promotion of a specific Muslim identity, which is infused with claims to authenticity and therefore followers are afforded a unique degree of doctrinal purity and legitimacy.[155] This self-proclaimed authenticity is encapsulated in a "muscular discourse" that is directed at reforming other, non-Salafi, Muslims, and which amounts to an activist worldview in which one sees oneself as pure and the other as in need of purification in both belief and practice.[156] There exists in this movement what some have labeled as a "hostile othering" of non-Salafi Muslims and the creation of "in-group" and "out-group" boundaries or membership.[157] The Salafi-Jihadi movement, is credited as viewing the world as being divided between loyalty and disavowal; truth and falsehood; faith and disbelief, and this binary position

[153] Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement p.215.
[154] Thomas Hegghammer "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism" in Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp.244-266, p.249-250.
[155] Thomas Hegghammer "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries?" p.249.
[156] Bernard Haykel "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action" in Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp.33-50, p.38.
[157] Bernard Haykel "On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action" p.38.

provides very rich data points from which to anchor studies.[158] This concept of the in-group and out-group will be addressed in more detail below.

In the later decades of the twentieth century the Arab Middle East saw the rise of violent Jihadist groups influenced by both Muslim Brotherhood activism and Salafi exclusivism. These groups were the forerunners of today's Salafi-Jihadi groups. Wiktorowicz succinctly describes the different approaches to Jihad that exist amongst Salafis stating that

> 'the [Salafi-] jihadi faction believes that violence can be used to establish Islamic states and confront the United States and its allies. Nonviolent Salafis, on the other hand, emphatically reject the use of violence and instead emphasize propagation and advice (usually private) to incumbent rulers in the Muslim world'.[159]

Salafi-Jihadist Ideology in Detail

Researchers have identified the key ideas of Salafi-Jihadism central of which are *takfir* and *tawhid*.[160] While these ideas exist in Islam, what is interesting is how the Salafi-Jihadi movement manipulate the interpretation of these concepts, in a process referred to as 'significant ideational mutation that credits the adherents with religious validation and endorsement'.[161] For the Salafi-Jihad movement *takfir* has become a valuable tool for the protection of Islam, a means of expelling those from the faith who are thought to be subverting it from within. Its importance as a concept to the contemporary Salafi-Jihadi movement stems from the principle purpose of *takfir*: defining precisely what the Muslim community is and who its constituents are, the in-group and out-group.[162] It concerns itself with the question of who is a Muslim and a natural consequence is that it also preoccupies itself with the conceptualisation of who is a disbeliever, or *kafir.*[163] By doing so it explicitly delineates the boundaries of faith, creating the in-group of rightful adherents while

[158] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p112.
[159] Quintan Wiktorowicz "A Genealogy of Radical Islam" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 28:2, (2005) pp.75-97, p75; Quintan Wiktorowicz "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad," *Middle East Policy* 8:4, (2001), pp. 18–38.
[160] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.14; Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" p.207.
[161] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2016) p.14.
[162] Thomas Hegghammer "Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries?" p.247-248.
[163] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.72.

also identifying an out-group of heretics.[164] The doctrine has been extremely effective in fuelling intra-Muslim tensions, violence and sectarianism.

A central pillar of Islam, trying to realise the *tawhid* of God is the central goal of every Muslim's life with Salafis tending to prioritise its fulfilment more than others. It is described by Wiktorowicz as the 'crux' of their faith.[165] While Muslims proclaim that 'there is no agent but Allah, there is no object of worth besides Allah, and there is no reality but Allah', Salafi-Jihadis pursue the principle of *tawhid* with a rigidity that is both compelling and chilling.[166] Historically, Abdullah Azzam's declaration that only those who fought jihad could truly appreciate the full dimensions of *tawhid,* was a bold idea, suggesting that any Muslim who refrained from participating in jihad in its militant terms, was suffering from deficiencies in their faith and neglecting their duty.[167] This introduced a sense of obligation and runs parallel with the fundamental facet of narrative communication that a resolution or course of action is presented to the reader.

According to Ayman al-Zawahiri post 9/11, 'only a renewal of *tawhid*' could save Muslims from 'living on the margins of the New World Order'.[168] This linked the idea of *tawhid* to a broader system of revolutionary change, which involves the implementation of *Shari'a,* a political authority for Islam, and end to occupation of *dar al-Harb*. Belief and adherence to the concept of *tawhid* is represented in many images of foreign fighters and is often accompanied by illustrations of violence or weaponry on display.

[164] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.72.
[165] Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" p.208; Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.145.
[166] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.147.
[167] Haroro J. Ingram "Deciphering the Siren Call of Militant Islamist Propaganda: Meaning, Credibility & Behavioural Change" ICCT Research Paper, 2016 p.13.
[168] Ayman al-Zawahiri "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief" *Al-Sahab Media* (December 2006) quoted in Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.153.

In the context of Islam as a living ideal, faith alone is a necessary but insufficient condition of both belief and membership and must be coupled with action and vice versa.[169] In the Salafi-Jihadi strand this action often extends beyond the five pillars and encompasses violent means. But the conditions must exist for potential violence to be actualised. The idea of a non-state and irregular force of volunteers marching off to become *mujahideen* gained popular traction in the modern era during the Afghan-Soviet war in the 1980s, which was fuelled by the ideas of Abdullah Azzam.[170] This refocusing of priorities has been described as a decision to confront the "far enemy". This was compounded by the 2003 invasion of Iraq, which fuelled a sense of duty for those who were adherents or even sympathetic to the doctrine of a "global Jihad.[171] Cole Bunzel's paper for Brookings on the ideology of the Islamic State identifies within the group's texts and speeches a number of emphasised doctrinal concepts. The most prominent of these stipulate: all Muslims must associate exclusively with fellow "true" Muslims and disassociate from anyone not

[169] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.147.
[170] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.41.
[171] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.42.

fitting this narrow definition.[172] Research has demonstrated that the propaganda of Jihadists 'reduces complex phenomena to simple clichés, creating dichotomies of black and white, "us" versus "them", good and evil, often linked to incitements to disapprove of an opponent or hate an enemy'.[173]

British Salafist (-Jihadist) Brand

According to Sadek Hamid, British Muslim communities comprise a diverse range of traditions, with the majority of their corresponding theological and ideological trends imported into the UK with the arrival of the early South Asian settler communities in the 1960s and 1970s.[174] Writing on the appeal of Salafism to British Muslim youth, Hamid notes that the 1990s were the defining era for second-generation Islamic revival and activism and that this decade was the most intense for its identity politics and the growth of Salafism in the UK.[175] He notes that an important factor in championing the Salafi perspective was the perception that its adherents had 'superior religious knowledge' as 'they were seen to be demonstrably practising Islam according to the Qur'an and "authentic Sunnah" and gained respect for coming to the aid of fellow Muslims in physical danger'.[176] The globalisation of well-funded Saudi Salafi discourse, complimented by the funding of mosques, the pre-eminent presence of Salafism on the internet and the influx of graduates from the Islamic University of Medina in Saudi Arabia is also attributable to the attractiveness of Salafism at the time.[177] Compared with other Muslim groups, the Salafi trend seemed to offer a cohesive identity that young people could purchase, a type of all-in-one package, which could explain its relatively stronger attraction for converts seeking a "rationalised Islam".[178]

---

[172] Cole Bunzel "From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State" *Brookings Analysis Paper* 19, March 2015.
[173] Alex P. Schmid (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 676-677.
[174] Sadek Hamid "The Development of British Salafism" *ISIM Review* 21, Spring 2008, pp.10-11, p.10.
[175] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of " Authentic" Islam" in Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp. 384-402, p.391.
[176] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of " Authentic" Islam" p.392.
[177] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of " Authentic" Islam" p.393.
[178] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of " Authentic" Islam" p.393.

Running concurrently, in the mid to late 1990s there was an apparent policy of wilful blindness by British authorities to militant Islamist activity in the UK which with the benefit of reflection represented a poor strategic decision which would influence latter developments. Evidence reveals that of all Islamist-inspired terrorist convictions in the UK between 1999 and 2009 almost 70 per cent of the offences were committed by Britons.[179] In the years following al Qaeda's operations in Africa in the late 1990s, and especially after 9/11, the British government began to alter its approach of tolerance to Salafi groups, such that the so-called "Londonistan" or safe haven of the 1990s gradually came to an end.[180] The UK government adopted a more robust and proactive approach to individuals (Salafi-Jihadis) who incited violence including prominent proselytisers Abu Hamza, Omar Bakri Mohammed and Abu Qatada, by seeking their deportation and closing down their places of worship such as Finsbury Park Mosque. According to Neumann, the 2003 invasion of Iraq provided Salafists with a renewed sense of purpose' and 'created a more supportive environment which Salafi jihadists could draw on for finance and recruits.[181] In the case of the UK, the threat of UK home-grown terrorism against the UK 'increased substantially' following the invasion of Iraq.[182] The proceeding sections will examine the differing perspectives which exist within the literature as to the role that religion plays in the mobilisation of Salafi-Jihadist foreign fighters in Syria.

Salafi-Jihadism is Void of Religious Ideology

One of the strongest proponents of this position is Oliver Roy who contends that 'Jihadis do not descend into violence after pouring over sacred texts, as they do not have the necessary religious culture. They do not become radicals because they have misread the texts and the paucity of religious knowledge among Jihadis is glaring'.[183] Contemporary Salafi-Jihadism in the UK according to Roy is a youth movement that

[179] Robin Simcox, Hannah Stuart & Houriya Ahmed *Islamist Terrorism: The British Connection* (London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 2010) p.viii.
[180] James Brandon "The Changing-Face of Salafi-Jihadi Movements in the United Kingdom" *CTC Sentinel* 1:2, (2008) pp.4-5.
[181] Peter Neumann "Europe's Jihadist Dillema" *Survival,* 48:2 (2006), pp. 71-84, p.74-5.
[182] Frank Foley *Countering Terrorism in Britain and France: Institutions, Norms and Shadows of the Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013) p.30.
[183] Oliver Roy "Who Are The New Jihadis?" *The Guardian* available at https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis (last accessed 10 January 2017).

is not only constructed independently of parental religion and culture, but is also rooted in wider youth culture.[184] European jihadists he observes have Muslim backgrounds, but they are not religious, and none has a past of piety. Rather, their route into Jihadism is facilitated by a broader disaffection from the societies into which they were integrated and as an act of rebellion. gives them 'a cause, a label, a grand narrative to which they can add the bloody signature of their personal revolt,' in the way extremist left-wing ideologies did for some in the 1960s and 1970s.[185] Roy's position firmly reflects ascribing to a "push" factors approach.

According to a 2013 ICSR report's finding, not everyone who joined a Syrian jihadist group from the UK was motivated by a 'fully formed jihadist worldview' and their research which relied largely on social media monitoring, concluded in many cases the Jihadist ideology was only adopted once in Syria and in close proximal contact with more hardened fighters.[186] This statement potentially correlates with the findings of Marc Sageman who argued that social networks are more crucial to Salafi-Jihadism than religious ideology.[187] Much of the social media discourse from foreign fighters did not appear overly religious in content and pointed more to the hostile othering of the West and employed terms such as *kuffar* and apostates and even with the character limitations that Twitter had at the time, they did not engage in Qu'ranic or Salafist influencer quoting.

In February 2013, Ibrahim al-Mazwagi became the first British-born casualty of the conflict in Syria. A 21 year-old university graduate from north London, he was killed as he took part in combat against the Assad regime.[188] While not claiming to be representative of the entire population who travelled to Syria for extremist

---

[184] Oliver Roy "Who Are The New Jihadis?"

[185] Olivier Roy, 'France's Oedipal Islamist Complex,' *Foreign Policy*, available at http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/01/07/frances-oedipal-islamist-complex-charlie-hebdo-islamicstate-isis/ (last accessed 21 July 2016).

[186] Aaron Zelin, *ISCR Insight European Foreign Fighters in Syria,* ICSR Insight, 2 April 2013.

[187] Marc Sageman, Understanding Terror Networks, (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, 2004).

[188] Raquel de Silva and Rhys Crilley, "Talk about terror in our back gardens: an analysis of online comments about British foreign fighters in Syria", *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* 10:1 (2017), pp.162-186, p.163.

purposes, the *Channel 4* news interview with al-Mazwagi broadcast in June 2013, is fascinating as it is equally troubling when he is asked to explain what Jihad is, and struggles to conjure up an answer, initially replying jokingly that "Jihad it is to kick Obama's butt".[189]

Exclusive: the jihadi Brit who fought and died in Syria | Channel 4 News

The UN's 2017 report on foreign fighters concluded that in their sample of interviewees (43 in total), when directly asked about the influence of ideology over their decision to go to Syria, only 10 respondents (23 per cent), stated that ideology was 'extremely important,' with one more saying that it was 'very important'.[190] The researchers also found that very few of their sample believe in the idea of an Islamic State or of establishing a Caliphate in the Levant. Only seven respondents stated that at least in part they were motivated to go to Syria to help establish the Caliphate.[191]

The former British Counterterrorism Chief (for MI5 and MI6) Richard Barrett, has noted that reasons for Britain's going to Syria vary for different individuals, but among youth in the Middle East and North Africa in particular, a profound sense of disillusionment was a very common theme.[192] According to Barrett many who travel to Syria profess motivations focusing on a sense of religious duty, but Barrett counters this with the argument that 'religion really is a gloss over a much deeper

[189] Channel 4 News "Exclusive: The Jihadi Brit Who Fought and Died in Syria", available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_qXJaFQmZY (last accessed 18 September 2016).

[190] Hamed el-Said and Richard Barrett *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Phenomenon in Syria,* United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism, July 2015, p.35.

[191] Hamed el-Said and Richard Barrett *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Phenomenon in Syria* p.36.

[192] Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria," Transcript of Discussion Moderated by Joanne Myers (New York: Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, 2014), p. 3. available at www.soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06.TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf (last accessed 30 October 2016).

desire for a sense of identity and purpose and belonging' among people seeking direction and fulfillment."[193]

Religion as Key to Salafi-Jihadism Radicalisation

In contrast to the position of Roy there is a strong body of literature and research which argues that religion plays a key functionality in radicalising people toward a Salafi-Jihadist perspective. One such position propagated by Gilles Keppel which resulted in a very public disagreement of position with Roy, argues one cannot separate violent jihadism from the nonviolent forms of Salafism, and stresses the importance of such religious beliefs in creating the conditions for being drawn to terrorism. Quintan Wiktorowicz's research claimed that most Salafis spend their time learning about Islam in pursuit of living the purist Muslim life. He expanded further by examining the Jihadi branch, stating that 'even jihadis devote most of their time to education and the acquisition of religious knowledge: they spend more time with the Qu'ran than a Kalashnikov'.[194] Given that this was written in 2005, it would be interesting were Wiktorowicz to re-examine this statement to see if the radicalisation has morphed as a consequence of the Syrian conflict. Dawson and Amarasingam's research concluded that their interviewee's lives 'are saturated with a Salafi-Jihadist religio-political discourse'. Consequently, they argued, their religiosity, could be interpreted as critical to understanding their motivations.[195] A UK interviewee in their study cited the allure of Jihad from reading the Qur'an as a pull factor:

> The zeal for jihad always struck me when I would sit in my room and read Qur'an with English translation. I would wonder how jihad was fought today. At the outbreak of 2011 war in Syria, the thinking of going began and brothers from town who had gone were an inspiration.[196]

Dawson and Amarasingam are quite emphatic in their research findings, concluding that on the basis of their sample (which they wholly acknowledge has its limitations) nothing would happen without the framing work done by ideology; as they put it,

[193] Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria" p. 3.
[194] Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" p.212.
[195] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam "Talking to Foreign Fighters. Insights into the Motivations to *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 40:3 (2017), pp.191-210, p.206.
[196] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam "Talking to Foreign Fighters" p.199.

'radical action depends on seeing the world in new ways'. Consequently, the Salafi-jihadist religiosity of these foreign fighters, their ideology, according to their empirical research is paramount in interpreting their actions.[197]

An ICSR report in 2015 which examined the motivations of Europeans to depart for Syria and Iraq reported that faith and ideology played a larger role than previously acknowledged in the early days of the conflict.[198] Their first report in 2013 reached different conclusions – but ISIS had not formally announced its presence on the battlefields by that time, and intra-Muslim fighting was still in its infancy. Rand and Vasselo's analysis, based on social media, examined the reasons posted by people who traveled abroad to partake in violent action in Syria. They identified four prominent motivational themes, two of which correlate with the Salafi-Jihadist ideology, namely: 'the belief that the fight to establish a caliphate in the Levant and Iraq is part of a larger struggle by Sunnis against both the West and Shi'a Islam' and; 'the belief that the fight in Syria is a defensive struggle by the Ummah (the global community of Muslim believers) against the corrupt and apostate Assad regime'.[199] This research was based on social media posts, and compliments that of Dawson and Amarasingam not only in findings but having used different data points it creates more legitimacy for this claim.

Conclusion

While the debate on religion and ideology continues, it is beyond the scope of this project to come down fully on one side on the other. It is entirely plausible that some Jihadists are motivated by a genuine (pre-existing) religious commitment, as they see it through their lens, and that their actions are directly grounded in this commitment. But equally, it also entirely possible that others become Jihadists not out of religious commitment and were not remotely religious at the time that they became involved in Jihadists activism. Both Roy and Kepel for example, present

[197] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam "Talking to Foreign Fighters" p.196.
[198] Peter Neumann, "Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors" ICSR, September 2015, p.9.
[199] Dafna Rand and Anthony Vassalo, "Bringing the Fight Back Home: Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria," Policy Brief, *Center for a New American Security* (2014), p. 2.

compelling arguments to support their opposing perspectives, but I would argue a case that both positions are routed in Franco-centric background, and perhaps are not as applicable to the UK as to France whose secular society and colonial history mark its uniqueness.

A weakness of this study – and of much research in this area - is that it focused on evidence and material obtained from those already in Syria and this represents to some extent a line already crossed. Foreign fighters in Syria, in possession of their phones or devices with connectivity to the internet, are most likely to have been through some form of basic training and indoctrination of a particular religious persuasion will have been conducted. Therefore, we are in a state where it is difficult to assess whether the individuals ended up with a Salafi-Jihadist perspective because of prior religiosity, or if their current position is a manifestation of their religious training in Syria. Notwithstanding the previous points, I believe there is a weight in slight favour of the argument that the Salafist-Jihadist ideology is influential in the recruitment of British fighters for Syria and Iraq. This assertion is balanced with the belief that an individual's knowledge of this ideology may be patchy at best but that nonetheless that person believes that their religious ideology is paramount.

CHAPTER 4 - The *Ummah* as a Global Community

Introduction

This thesis explores how narratives can be persuasive and resilient and can inspire an individual toward adopting a particular point of view and subsequently pursue a certain course of action. In the course of this chapter, it will be demonstrated how the narratives of foreign fighters and recruiters are conveying a sense of belonging to the *Ummah*, and that owing to its messaging being contained in a narrative context, a subsequent reaction is elicited from the person. The *Ummah* is being examined distinctly, and not as part of the ideology chapter for a number of reasons. Primary amongst these is the fact that much of the foreign fighter rhetoric available in the early stages of the conflict cited the need to help brother's and sisters a key feature of the Ummah's doctrine. At the time of researching it was unexpected how much territory ISIS would gain, and subsequently lose, but the *Ummah* converged into a physical (albeit unrecognised) state for a minority of the Muslim population who ascribed to this group's extreme views. Furthermore, the *Ummah*'s correlation with an imagined community, conceptually converges with the narrative world and therefore warranted specific detailing.

The term *Ummah* is found 64 times in the Qur'an and appears frequently in the *Hadith* (the recorded words and deeds of the Prophet Mohammed).[200] Relying on translations within the context of where the term is cited, has revealed that *Ummah* has multiple and diverse meanings in the Qur'an, for example referring to 'a single person, a way, a period of time, and people of a group'.[201] However, it is the Hadith that conveyed a more focused notion of *Ummah*, in referring to the Prophet's followers or communities, rather than to any community.[202] However, as Ali contends, in spite of the numerous and often vague meanings in Islam's early days, it

[200] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation: A Reappraisal in the Wake of the 'Cartoons Affair'" *Nations and Nationalism,* 14:2 (2008), pp.303-321, p.306

[201] Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State: A Western and Muslim Discourse" *Kultur: The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Studies,* 2:1, (2002) pp.37-58, p.38.

[202] Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State" p.39.

evolved and 'came to symbolise and embody the very notion of an Islamic community'.[203]

In this chapter I will examine how the *Ummah* differs from the traditional definition of the nation state not only legally but with regard to the softer elements of statehood such as customs and language. I will then focus on the concept of the imagined community and how the *Ummah* has been described as encompassing this by leading academics in this field. I will examine British perceptions of the concept of *Ummah*. Finally I will provide evidence for how the *Ummah* has evolved to be employed as a justification for violent action and provide empirical evidence from Syria and Iraq for this position.

The *Ummah* and the Nation State

While the *Ummah* is often presented as an alterative to the concept of the nation state, these two concepts also have some elements in common. According to Smith the nation is defined as 'a named community possessing an historic territory, shared myths and memories, a common public culture and common laws and customs'.[204] Since the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, all nations draw boundaries to define membership in the national community and with regard to the nation, there are both formal and legal criteria of citizenship.

It is an important observation to highlight that prior to the Peace of Westphalia, religion had a critical role in shaping the political landscape, but Westphalia consigned religion to a secondary position, for obvious reasons.[205] Nationalism is a secular political ideology which, it is argued, demands paramount loyality and therefore conflicts with the ideal of the *Ummah*.[206] As Ali observes '…the idea of "nation above everything" is incompatible with that of "Islam above everything"' and that 'nationalism in this sense demands secularism, which will lead to the

[203] Riaz Hassan, "Modernization, Social Change and Religion: A Case Study of the Islamic Ummah" *Lahore Journal of Policy Studies,* 4:1 (2011) pp.49-58, p.49.
[204] Anthony D. Smith "When is a Nation" *Geopolitics,* 7:2 (2002), pp. 5-32, p.15.
[205] Barak Mendelsohn, "God vs. Westphalia: Radical Islamist Movements and the Battle for Organising the World" *Review of International Studies* 38:03 (2012), pp.589-613, p.589.
[206] Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State" p.44.

destruction of the possibility of the unity of the Muslim *Ummah*…'.[207] Essentially, identification with the *Ummah* (or identifying with such an entity) offers a challenge to identity and community circumscribed by national borders.

The notion that the Muslim community could perhaps be considered a diaspora is contested by Sayyid who states that it is 'an unlikely metaphor' as there is no homeland from which Muslims were displaced or to where they wish to return.[208] Muslim theology divides the world into two spheres of influence: the *Dar al-Islam* ('The Abode of Islam') and the *Dar al-Harb*, or *Dar al-Kufr* ('The Abode of War' or, 'Unbelief') and according to Poston 'only under special circumstances is the Muslim allowed to live for any time in a non-Muslim land'.[209] The universality of Islam precludes any concept of a homeland as such, with prominent Islamist theoretician of the twentieth century, Sayyid Qutb, declaring that a Muslim should have no nationality except his belief.[210] Westphalian sovereignty, the most central element of the state-based order, stands in direct opposition to the view espoused by groups such as ISIS in which sovereignty is the property of God alone.[211]

In addition to the formal and legal criteria of citizenship of a nation, there are symbolic and sociological dimensions of belonging such as class, religion, ethnicity and race. Ali lists six concepts upon which he contends nationalism is based '…unity, origin, language, tradition, history, and love of land' and he argues that none are contradictory to the concept of Islamic *Ummah*.[212] It is noteworthy bearing in mind Qutb's declaration, that Ali cited 'love of the land' and not territory.

---

[207] Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State" p.44.
[208] Bobby Sayyid "Beyond Westphalia: Nations and Diasporas - The Case of the Muslim Umma" *Paper presented at Muslim Identity in the 21St Century*, 31 Oct - 01 Nov 1998, available at http://www.islamic-studies.org/sayyid.html (last accessed 09 January 2014).
[209] Larry Poston *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.31-32.
[210] Sayyid Qutb *Milestones* quoted in Mark A. Gabriel *Journey Into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* (Florida: Frontline Press, 2006) p.86.
[211] Barak Mendelsohn, "God vs. Westphalia: Radical Islamist Movements and the Battle for Organising the World" *Review of International Studies* 38:03 (2012), pp.589-613, p.603.
[212] Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State", p.47.

In his research Robert Saunders, compared the strength of feeling associated with nationalism to that of membership of the global *Ummah* concluding that the latter 'will, in certain cases fill the role played by nation-states'.[213] The idea of the *Ummah* has been an important element of Islamic thought, particularly during the decline of the Ottoman Empire before World War I, and has been closely associated with the preservation of the Caliphate.[214] The abolition of the Caliphate by Mustafa Kemal the founding president of modern-day independent Turkey in 1924 has been described by one Islamist movement as 'representing the essence of betrayal of Islam' and its re-establishment is considered an obligation by Salafi-Jihadists.[215]

The *Ummah* as an Imagined Community

Conceptually as has been demonstrated, the *Ummah* incorporates the Muslim community into the world as a whole. Some scholars discuss the status of this community as being imagined given that it transcends so many traditional markers of a nation state. Anderson's description of an 'imagined political community' may be usefully applied here to an 'imagined global community' or the *Ummah*. Anderson defines the nation as an 'imagined political community' in which a member of a nation will never know or even see most of his co-nationals no matter how small the nation, yet they feel an interconnectedness or a 'deep, horizontal comradeship'.[216] An imagined community is not devoid of reality, but in this instance the imagined community of the *Ummah* is a powerful source of identity for a large population dispersed globally, of varying ethnicities and with different political and social agendas. Hassan's review of the evolution of the *Ummah* concludes that over time it '…became state of mind, a form of social consciousness, or an imagined community which united the faithful in order to lead a virtuous life and to safeguard and even to expand the boundaries of the autonomous *Ummah'*.[217]

---

[213] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation" p.304.

[214] The term Caliphate stems from the Arabic *khalifa,* which means substitute or deputy and refers to the system of government imposed by the Arabic tribes after the death of the Prophet Mohammed in 632 C.E.

[215] Kristine Sinclair "Islam in Britain and Denmark: Deterritorialized Identity and Reterritorialized Agendas" *Journal of Muslim and Minority Affairs,* 28:1 (2008), pp.45-52, p.46.

[216] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1991) p.7.

[217] Riaz Hassan, "Modernization, Social Change and Religion" p.50.

Echaibi contends that the *Ummah* is a strategic rhetorical tool '…deployed as a rallying cry to establish a transnational political entity that transcends the very notion of the nation state'.[218] When examining the concept of the *Ummah* in the context of geopolitical developments, what also appears is that the sense of belonging to this community intensifies during crises. The belief in the shared community has been invoked, with varying intensity at different times and places.[219] Given that the *Ummah* transcends traditional national territorial boundaries can in fact result in local events and issues potentially becoming less meaningful or influential to members of the community if they feel that there are more pressing international issues. This appears to consequently become a cyclical process nourishing the community of Muslims, whereby identifying with global concerns in turn impacts on how one perceives being a Muslim regardless of nationality and this global interconnectedness creates new affiliations amongst geographically diffused people. It has been argued that Salafi-Jihadism is an unintended side-effect of globalisation, which has created a new cohort of international fighters with loyalty only to their imagined *Ummah.*[220]

British Perception of the *Ummah*

While the issue of identity will be the subject of a later chapter, this section aims to outline how British Muslims identify themselves in the context of their nationalities as it provides a valuable context for subsequent analysis. According to the most recent census data available (2011) Muslims make up just 5 per cent of the population in Britain but belong to the second largest faith group, numbering 2.7 million. Muslims have the youngest age structure – over 50 per cent are under the age of 24. Furthermore, nearly 45 per cent of British Muslims are born in the UK and thus constitute the second or third generation.[221]

---

[218] Nabil Echchaibi "From Audio Tapes to Video Blogs: The De-localisation of Authority in Islam *Nation and Nationalism* 17:1 (2011) pp.25-44, p.41.
[219] Montserrat Guibernau "Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment" *Nations and Nationalism,* 10:1/2 (2004) pp.125-141, p.134.
[220] Emmanuel Karagiannis "Defining and Understanding the Jihadi-Salafi Movement" *Asian Security,* 10:2 (2014) pp.188-198, p.190.
[221] Office for National Statistics "What Does the Census Tell us About Religion in 2011?" available at https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/culturalidentity/religion/articles/fullstorywhatdoesthecensustellusaboutreligionin2011/2013-05-16 (last accessed 16 May 2015).

Almost 12 years ago, behaviour and attitudes research conducted by Pew found that British Muslims tended to identify with their religion in the first instance as opposed to their nationality.[222] A recently published IPSOS MORI research report found that religion is a far more important part of the life for most Muslims than it is for other people in Britain, and is central to their sense of identity.[223] Asma Mustafa's research found that 'spheres of influence that used to be accepted, such as parents, elders and cultural dictates, have been swept aside by young Muslims in favour of religious decrees and spiritual guidance'.[224] In a similar sense, Raza argues that many Muslims have two sets of identities. This first strand of identity 'will be with Allah, His Messenger and Islam….by virtue of this identity the Muslim will belong to the Ummah (community)…irrespective of any national and international boundaries'.[225] The second set of identity 'will be with the state of which they are naturalised citizens…Muslims are expected to become good citizens of the country in which they are resident, and follow its laws'.[226] For British Muslims, this obligation to be a part of two communities with such loyalty can be difficult to manage, especially when the two may have competing strategies and goals.

The concept of the *Ummah* implies that the interests of British Muslims are not confined to Britain but extend beyond its borders through the diaspora and global *Ummah*, which is facilitated by the advancements in information and communications technology. Cyberspace promotes a homogenous, de-territorialised form of Islam, one that has cut its links to many Islamic traditions and has witnessed the shifting of religious authority from the control of a diverse *ulema* (learned

[222] Pew Research Global Attitudes Project "Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity" p.3, available at http://www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/7-6-06.pdf (last accessed 03 November 2017).
[223] Ipsos MORI "A Review of Survey Research on Muslims in Britain" available at https://www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/review-survey-research-muslims-britain-0 (last accessed 08 July 2018).
[224] Asma Mustafa *Identity and Political Participation Among Young British Muslims: Believing and Belonging* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015) p.4.
[225] Mohammed S. Raza quoted in Wasif Shadid and Sjoerd van Koningsveld "Loyalty to an Non-Muslim Government: An Analysis of Islamic Normative Discussions and of the Views of Some Contemporary Islamicists" Wasif A. Shadid and P. Sjoerd van Koningsveld (eds.) *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States* (Kampen: Kok Paros, 1996), pp.84-115, p.108.
[226] Mohammed S. Raza "Loyalty to an Non-Muslim Government" p.108.

religious leaders).[227] This in turn, allows online *"Ummahists"* as Saunder's has coined them, to exert influence displacing traditional authority sources such as the *Ulema*, local leaders and politicians.[228] The internet stands in for the idea of the *Ummah*, the mythologised Muslim community making this utopian community concrete, because one can interact with it.[229] As evidenced, trans-Atlantic fibre-optic optic cables have become a vehicle to transform a local concern into a global cause and vice versa.

Preeminent political scientist Olivier Roy's assessment of the current allure of the *Ummah* as a distinct alternative to national identity in the UK is conveyed succinctly in the following and very worthy of reproduction in its entirety in spite of its length:

> …many second or third generation European Muslims in, say, France and the UK are said to experience a conflict of identity: born and raised in Europe, they no longer identify with the country and/or culture in which their parents or grandparents were brought up, yet they also feel excluded from Western society, which still perceives them as foreigners. For them, the idea of becoming "citizens" of the *Ummah* – a virtual Islamic nation removed from territory and national culture – may be more attractive than for first generation immigrants.[230]

As Saunders surmises '*Ummahism* has found fertile ground in the marginalised Muslim ghettos of European cities'.[231] It could be therefore argued, that the greatest boost to the materialisation of the *Ummah* as a nation has stemmed from postcolonial Muslim emigration from *Dar-al-Islam* to Europe.[232] In spite of the existence of various Islamic scholars' declarative statements concerning Muslim's living in non-Muslim countries, the era of globalisation has witnessed unprecedented flows of migration across the world, and the choice to live in a Muslim country has become more difficult to balance with the socio-economic opportunities that may exist elsewhere.[233] Over time, Muslims and their descendants who re-located to

---

[227] Nabil Echchaibi "From Audio Tapes to Video Blogs: The De-localisation of Authority in Islam *Nation and Nationalism* 17:1 (2011) pp.25-44

[228] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation" p.314.

[229] Marc Sageman quoted in Lawrence Wright "The Terror Web" *The New Yorker,* available at https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/02/the-terror-web (last accessed 10 August 2015).

[230] Olivier Roy *Globalised Islam: The Search for a New Ummah* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), pp.117-147.

[231] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation" p.310.

[232] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation" p.309.

[233] Wasif Shadid and Sjoerd van Koningsveld "Loyalty to an Non-Muslim Government: An Analysis of Islamic Normative Discussions and of the Views of Some Contemporary Islamicists" Wasif A. Shadid and P. Sjoerd van Koningsveld (eds.) *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States* (Kampen: Kok Paros, 1996) pp.84-115.

countries such as the UK and France in particular have adapted (to varying degrees, depending on the perspective) to the conditions of living outside the Muslim world. For many, part of this adaptation has included strengthening the concept of the *Ummah*.[234]

Groups such as al-Muhajiroun and Hizb ut-Tahrir[235] promote in the UK, the idea of the *Ummah* and that boundaries are alien to Islam, artificial and a legacy of colonisation of Muslim lands.[236] However, it is an important distinction to make between the two groups in that Hizb ut-Tahrir's ideology is assessed as being revolutionary but strictly non-violent, whereas al-Muhajiroun is an ideologically related group but one which focuses on the necessity of taking part in conflicts worldwide which they perceive as 'Muslim struggles' in order to establish a Caliphate.[237] In the UK, with the increase in media coverage of such groups, coupled with tabloid interest in social media output, suspicion about the loyalty of Muslims to their nations states has increased. This has been exponentially heightened since the London's mass-casualty terrorist attack on 7 July 2005, arguably attributable to the fact that three of the four perpetrators of the attacks were born in the UK.

One final point that requires addressing is the grievances that are described by many as 'perceived' on the part Muslims in the UK and Europe. Often it is highlighted that mainstream European media outlets construct Euro-Muslims as a community of secluded, distrustful, and alien economic underachievers. Research conducted into Muslims in the UK media which was based on a content analysis of 974 newspaper articles about British Muslims and Islam in the press from 2000 to 2008, concluded that the coverage of British Muslims tended to focus on Muslims as 'a threat' or as 'a

[234] Robert A. Saunders, "The Ummah as Nation" p.309; Peter Mandaville, "Communication and Diasporic Islam" pp.135-147.
[235] Hizb ut-Tahrir, Mendelsohn explains, 'propagate that the re-establishment of the Caliphate is a prerequisite for the restoration of the *Ummah's* purpose and the realisation of its universal goals. Only under the Caliphate will the Islamic *Ummah* be in a position to realise its godly ordained destiny to oversee mankind according to the Shari'ah' in Barak Mendelsohn, "God vs. Westphalia: Radical Islamist Movements and the Battle for Organising the World" *Review of International Studies* 38:03 (2012), pp.589-613 p.606.
[236] Kristine Sinclair "Islam in Britain and Denmark" p.46.
[237] Kristine Sinclair "Islam in Britain and Denmark" p.47.

problem'.[238] In a similar study assessing the almost 2,800 news items, of which 60% were Muslim related Hickman, Nickels and Silvestri found the Muslim community to have been predominantly defined in juxtaposition to perceived 'British' values. For example, the communities are deemed 'suspect' and judged by news publishers as groups who do not share these values.[239]

The *Ummah* as Justification for Violent action

Some argue that when a religion offers rules for society, the group of believers are offered a very privileged opening to interpret those religious rules as a guide for the political management of the public sphere. In this respect monotheistic religions, with their emphasis on the oneness of God, are particularly disposed to expansive interpretations that conceive a global religious order.[240] Furthermore, of relevance to this section, in all three Abrahamic monotheistic faiths (Islam, Christianity and Judaism), Post states 'there is language that has been interpreted not only to permit killing, but where killing in the name of God becomes a sacred obligation'.[241]

With political Islam rising in prominence after the 1970s, the concept of the *Ummah* has been harnessed regularly by extremist organisations to garner support.[242] Oliver Roy characterises the split in Islamist ideology since the 1980s as a choice between integration and normalisation within the framework of the state, and what he terms

[238] Kerry Moore, Paul Mason, and Justin Lewis, Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008 (Cardiff: Cardiff University School of Journalism, 2008) p.21, available at http://www.channel4.com/news/media/pdfs/Cardiff%20Final%20Report.pdf (last accessed 19 May 2017); Kerry Moore, Paul Mason, and Justin Lewis, Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008 (Cardiff: Cardiff University School of Journalism, 2008) p.9, available at http://www.channel4.com/news/media/pdfs/Cardiff%20Final%20Report.pdf (last accessed 19 May 2017).

[239] Mary J. Hickman, Lyn Thomas, Henri Nickels, and Sara Silvestri *Suspect Communities'? Counter-Terrorism Policy, the Press, and the Impact on Irish and Muslim Communities in Britain* (London: London Metropolitan University, 2011) p. 18 available at http://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/public/docs/suspect-communities-report-july2011.pdf (last accessed 19 May 2017).

[240] Barak Mendelsohn, "God vs. Westphalia" p.595.

[241] J. M. Post, *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p.160.

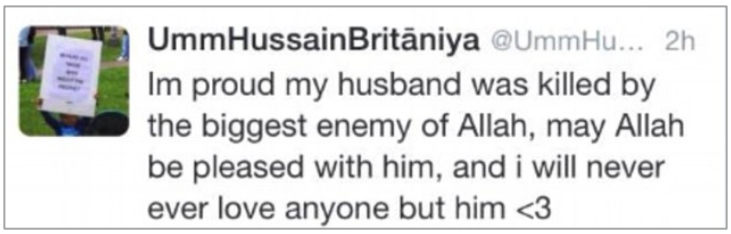
[242] Hegghammer, Thomas. "The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalization of Jihad"*International Security* 35:3 (Winter 2010/2011) pp.53-94; Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State" p.43.

as ‘‘neo-fundamentalism’.[243] This neo-fundamentalism is explained as a restrictive, ‘scripturalist and conservative view of Islam’ that rejects the national dimension in favour of the *Ummah*.[244] Islamist militants have been taught that they have an obligation to respond to the difficulties and troubles of the *Ummah*, and that the religiously correct response to physical assaults against the *Ummah,* the oppressed brothers and sisters is ‘jihad’’.[245] The Islamic legal definition of Jihad is to fight, and is a ritualistic act which has a spectrum stretching from offensive jihad which is a considered and deliberate act designed to make territorial acquisitions, and defensive jihad which arises organically and spontaneously in response to external political events.[246] This might include foreign invasion, civil unrest, or another series of events resulting in the breakdown of social order.[247]

What, then, is the Salafi intellectual framework? It may be generally defined as a variant of ‘pan-Islamism’. This term refers to those religious or political transnational movements that emphasize the unity of the *Ummah* (the community of believers) over specific cultural, national, or ethnic loyalties and that the *Ummah* is an entity under siege.[248] Salafi-Jihadists are observed to attempt to instil in fellow Muslims the belief that the only identity that truly matters is that of membership in the *Ummah,* and that it subsequently bestows comfort, dignity, security and honour on Muslims.[249] The message below posted by the wife of a British foreign fighter killed fighting for ISIS illustrates the glory of violence which is present in Salafist-Jihadist ideology and the pride and honour his widow claims to exude through her Twitter account.

---

[243] Olivier Roy *Globalised Islam* p.1.
[244] Olivier Roy *Globalised Islam* p.1.
[245] Peter Neumann and Brooke Rogers “Recruitment and Mobilisation for the Islamist Militant Movement in Europe” King’s College London, p.78 available at http://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/doc_centre/terrorism/docs/ec_radicalisation_study_on_mobilisation_tactics_en.pdf (last accessed 13 May 2016).
[246] Thomas Hegghammer “Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries?” p.246.
[247] Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism* p.38.
[248] Emmanuel Karagiannis “Defining and Understanding the Jihadi-Salafi Movement” *Asian Security,* 10:2 (2014) pp.188-198, p.189.
[249] Assaf Moghadam, “The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology” p.15.



Another characteristic of discourse from foreign fighters is their choice of word to describe their location i.e. al-Sham. This is an inherited trait from AQ who, when naming their franchises grants them geographical references (al Qaeda in the land of two rivers, al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula). In doing so, ISIS (and AQ) avoids a name that could be interpreted as granting legitimacy to the Westphalian system and to authorities in the particular states it targets.[250] In social media posts across all platforms Syria is referred to as Sham by the foreign fighter contingent indicating indoctrination into the community of Salafist-Jihadist groups there. What is additionally of interest and evidenced from the message below, that al-Sham is quoted in the context of scriptural references that illustrates the strict adherence to the religiosity of the campaign.

Another feature of foreign fighter communication is the posed imagery almost always features the narrator proselytising with the index finger of his right hand extended as if pointing to the sky. The Jihadi interpretation of *al-Tawheed* a monotheistic doctrine at the centre of Islam is a central feature of Salafi-Jihadist ideology as previously discussed. *Al-Tawheed*, the uncompromising faith in the 'Oneness of God', has provided Salafis with a rich and complex body of literature to explain this doctrine and guide Muslims on the beliefs and practices that cultivate

[250] Barak Mendelsohn, "God vs. Westphalia" p.601.

and maintain this strict monotheistic faith.[251] As the image below illustrates, foreign fighters choose make this very simple gesture, but one that is laden with symbolism and used as a statement of belief and ideology.

The Narrative that *Ummah* is a Site of Improvement and Uplift

Perhaps the most ignominious and insidious aspect of current ISIS-related propaganda is that of "lifestyle-shaming" which is evidenced on all social media platforms and is not exclusive to Twitter, albeit it is particularly prevalent on the latter given its characteristics of imagery combined with optional short textual messages. The tactic, which is an adaptation of a label associated with cyber bulling, is perhaps self-explanatory: it involves attempts to influence receivers of messages into believing that their lifestyle choices at present are "shameful".

Cognisant that many conventional individual and social practices in the UK are considered 'forbidden' in the Salafist-Jihadist puritanical interpretation of Islam, nationalistic semiotics are employed in the hope of fostering guilt and ultimately, anti-nationalism and the references to home comforts are commonly deployed it appears in the hope of illiciting a negative response. Ultimately it appears that the

[251] Ismail Raji al Faruqi *Al Tawhid: Its Implications on Thought and Life* (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Though, 2000).

aim is to foster a feeling of alienation from mainstream British society and the perceived materialism which is believed to dominate Western culture. Using terminology such as *kuffar* as witnessed in the below tweet is illustrative of this type of deliniation being made between us and them.

However, this psychological warfare is carefully balanced with appealing to prospective fighter's trivial home comforts in an effort to impress upon them that there will be some familiarity in their new home. Such statements (like the one below) are an interesting balance to the general lifestyle-shaming that occurs and perhaps illustrative of the true desires of British fighters, balanced with the need to recruit and draw more recruits by alluding to something that both parties can identify with.

Being part of the *Ummah*, and more importantly coming to the defence of the *Ummah* it is conveyed, will lead to personal improvement and enhancement. For a Salafist-Jihadist one cannot live a full life as a Muslim in the land of the *Kuffar* and therefore travelling to the Syrian/Iraqi lands can free you and make you a part of something bigger, something better. Tweets from Syria and Iraq are illustrative of the perception that living in a Muslim country demonstrates to fighters how much the 'infidels' have changed Islam and Muslims.

In 2014 a group referring to themselves as *Rayat al Tawheed*, claimed to include a number of British Jihadis within their ranks in Syria. Active across all social media platforms, they made a number of references on Twitter to the requirement of all Muslims to make the *Hijra* to the lands of *al-Sham*. Their imagery featured references to the necessity for "real men" implying that the individual who ignores the call is somewhat inferior. This is illustrative of the boundary marking synonymous with the Salafist-Jihadist movement – identifying the in-group and out-group.

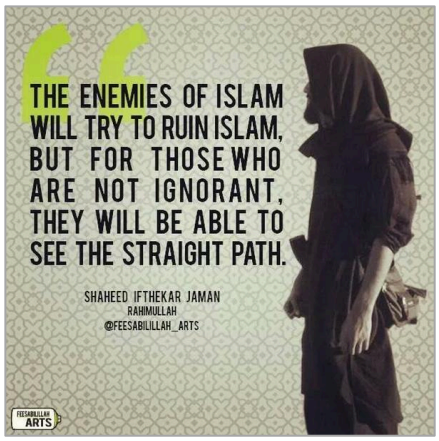
As indicated in Chapter 2, we can identify the grievance narrative as being instrumental to British foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. In this vein, ISIS relies heavily upon the victimhood narrative, the idea that the global community of (*Sunni*) Muslims are being persecuted by a global conspiracy, 'to justify not only its most heinous acts, but also its very existence'.[252] ISIS leader Al-Baghdadi paints Sunni Muslims as victims, who are persecuted and in despair and by labelling them as underdogs to the 'other' (the subjugators) creates a symbolic divide that reinforces the importance of defending the *Ummah.* Social media then depicts images of fighters setting passports alight, destroying the very symbol of their official national citizenship status and symbolically completing their separation from the 'other'.

[252] Charlie Winter, "Documenting the Virtual Caliphate" *Quilliam Foundation,* October 2015, p.23.

"*Ummah* Consciousness"

In the Prophet's Sunnah he is quoted as saying 'the believers, in their mutual mercy, love and compassion, are like a single body; if one part of it feels pain the rest of the body will join it in staying awake and suffering fever'.[253] This leads to the observation that emotions are important to the conceptualisation of the *Ummah*' and confer an emotional legitimacy.[254] Smith adds, 'there is a felt filiation, as well as a cultural affinity, with a remote past in which a community was formed, a community that despite all the changes it has undergone, is still in some sense recognised as the ''same'' community'.[255] The employment of the *Ummah* doctrine in foreign fighter recruitment discourse represents not only a divergence from the Westphalian socio-political norm but also a fundamental contradiction in identity. As Mendelsohn argues, while many violent non-state groups with whom present-day foreign fighters are affiliated have historically criticised nationalist structures to 'make space for a true a-nationalistic, ethnicity-surmounting Islamic order', their recruitment strategy often capitalises on these 'imagined' communities, as this image illustrates.[256]

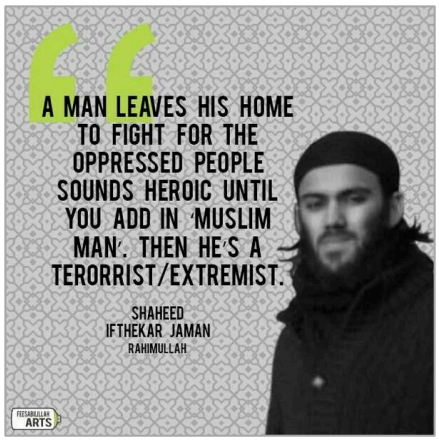
[253] Muhammed Saed Abdul Rahman *Islam Questions and Answers: Islamic History and Biography Vol 14* (London: MSA Publications, 2004) p.202.
[254] Gabrielle Marranci *The Anthropology of Islam* (Oxford: Berg, 2008) p.112.
[255] Anthony D. Smith *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991) p.33.
[256] Barak Mendelsohn "Foreign Fighters – Recent Trends" *Orbis* 55:2 (Spring 2011), pp.189-202, p.196.



A study of Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's address on 4 July 2014 through which he ceremoniously declared the formation of the Caliphate (Islamic State) and himself as the self-proclaimed Caliph (successor of the prophet Muhammad and politico-religious ruler of the *Ummah*) provides an opportunity to examine the master narrative given his status as the self-declared leader of the largest terrorist organisation in Syria and one which is intrinsicly connected with the concept of the global *Ummah*. He offers a narrative that is all encompassing and simplistic towards Muslims, fixating on particular evils they may face and a sole answer: devotion to the Islamic State - a utopia for all those who subscribe to the terror group's version of faith. He speaks of the responsibility one has to travel to IS-established land and join the fight stating 'O Muslims everywhere, whoever is capable of performing *hijrah* to the Islamic State, then let him do so, because *hijrah* to the land of Islam is obligatory.[257] Al-Baghdadi invites [directs] all dissatisfied Muslims to perform *hijrah* and to partake in Jihad from all over the world and to identify themselves as its *Ummah*.[258] Jihad, is the ultimate litmus test of one's faith to this struggle in Safalist-Jihadist doctrine. This is translated then in the messaging by British recruits in Syria through their social media as demonstrated below.

[257] Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi quoted in Amaryllis Georges "ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the Ummah" *TRENDS Research and Advisory* p.15 available at http://trendsinstitution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ISIS-rhetoric-for-the-creation-of-the-Ummah1.pdf (last accessed 22 July 2015).

[258] Amaryllis Georges "ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the Ummah" TRENDS Research and Advisory 22 July 2015 available at http://trendsinstitution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ISIS-rhetoric-for-the-creation-of-the-Ummah1.pdf (last accessed 22 July 2015).



Conclusion

Though most of the Muslim world has been subjected to the nation state model, the concept of the *Ummah* is retained as a strong, resilient theme among the Muslim community. Belonging to the *Ummah* means being part of a movement that reaches back in history and reaches out into the future and transcends time and place. As a member of the *Ummah*, the individual finds a larger-than-life cause and becomes part of something greater than one's self.[259] Notwithstanding the evidence above much of the commentary and research on the *Ummah* that was unearthed for this thesis lacked consideration of the divisions and sectarianism which exists among Muslims which must be borne in mind as being a conscious omission in this project.

[259] Kristine Sinclair "Islam in Britain and Denmark: Deterritorialized Identity and Reterritorialized Agendas" *Journal of Muslim and Minority Affairs,* 28:1 (2008), pp.45-52, p.50; Emmanuel Karagiannis "Defining and Understanding the Jihadi-Salafi Movement" *Asian Security,* 10:2 (2014) pp.188-198, p.190.

CHAPTER 5 - Identity: Who Am I? What Am I?

Introduction

Borum and Fein have suggested that foreign fighters typically enlist, or are recruited, based on one or more of three basic motivations: greed; grievance; and identity.[260] This chapter will examine the latter and how narratives express a sense of identity. Firstly I will introduce social identity theory as it forms the spine for this chapter's analysis. I will discuss the process of Identity-stripping and de-individuation and the creation of the collective identity and subsequent "we-narratives". Using empirical data I will demonstrate how impression management and self-presentation are particularly prevalent in foreign fighter social media through imagery, which we know to be a potent facet of communication.

Recalling the review of radicalisation in chapter 2, the essence of the process involves 'the management of one's identity'.[261] Shiraz Maher contends that 'issues of identity have long been recognised as being central to radicalisation' and attributes this as being fundamental to the recruitment of Western foreign fighters by extremist groups in Syria and Iraq.[262] Studies on radicalisation find identity to stand at the fore of the radicalisation process as success partially lies in the radical's ability to provide the "radical-to-be" with a distinctive identity.[263] Schwartz et.al. assert that in the conflict between fundamentalist Islam and the West, 'the threats are largely ideological and identity-based'.[264] The following chapter will tease such statements apart.

---

[260] Randy Borum & Robert Fein "The Psychology of Foreign Fighters" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40:3 *(*2016), pp.1-19, p.7.

[261] Michael King and Donald M. Taylor "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists" p.610.

[262] Shiraz Maher "The Roots of Radicalisation? It's Identity, Stupid" *ICSR Insight 23 June 2015*, (London: ICSR, 2015).

[263] Dina al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Muslim Diaspora" pp.67-91

[264] Seth J Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel and Alan S. Waterman, "Terrorism: An Identity Theory Perspective," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 32(6) pp.543.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity theory holds a number of important implications for the study of how people become members of terrorist organisations and therefore will be the focus of the proceeding analysis. It is primarily interested in the socio-cognitive processes underlying group dynamics and how they shape identity.[265] Social identities are reflections of the social categories, groups, and networks into which individuals belong and social categories are broad, "large-scale" sources of social identity of which religion is an example.[266] The chapter will analyse individual engagement in terrorism through the lens of social identity theory, and focus on the extent to which individuals identify themselves in terms of group membership.[267] The central tenet of the relatively new theory is that individuals define their identities along two dimensions: social, defined by membership in various social groups; and personal, the idiosyncratic attributes that distinguish an individual from others.[268] There is a dual functionality to the self and identity as individuals are evidenced to seek to belong to groups with a sense of common history and purpose.[269] But equally identity needs to provide individuals with the ability to distinguish themselves from others, and allow for groups to constantly reconstruct their identities in order to adapt to ever-changing social realities.

Schwartz et.al. contend that those studying terrorism, in particular westerners, have made a number of critical errors including maintaining that individuals engaged in terrorism do so because they are "searching" for an identity.[270] The researchers in this instance argue the contrary that individuals engage in terrorism as an expression of the identity they already have developed or have been assigned.[271] This is a very

[265] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", p.76.
[266] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", p.76.
[267] Henry Tajfel & John C. Turner "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour" In William G. Austin & Steven Worchel (Eds.) *Psychology of Intergroup Relations,* 2nd ed., (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1986) pp.7-24.
[268] Judith A. Howard "Social Psychology of Identities" in *Annual Review of Sociology,* 2000, pp.367-393, p.369.
[269] Henri Tajfel *Human Groups and Social Categories: Studies in Social Psychology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[270] Seth J. Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel & Alan S. Waterman "Terrorism: An Identity Theory Perspective" *Studies of Conflict and Terrorism* 32:6 (2009), pp.537-559, p.539.
[271] Seth J. Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel & Alan S. Waterman "Terrorism" p.539.

relevant assertion for this chapter, as it exemplifies the difference between the process of radicalisation and the role that identity plays in the process. As the authors of the paper describe:

> Feelings of disenfranchisement from mainstream society are not uncommon among young people, but in few cases does this prompt a person to become a suicide bomber. However, such feelings of disenfranchisement, when coupled with fervent adherence to traditional dichotomous "us versus them"" religious principles justifying violence against those perceived to threaten one's religious or cultural group, a strong prioritisation of the group over the individual, and a belief that one's group is morally superior to the group being attacked, may combine to make terrorism considerably more likely.[272]

The following analysis will address the key issues raised in the above statement paying particular attention to the role of religiosity. In her research on violent Islamist extremism in the Muslim diaspora, Dina al Raffie found that a contributor to individuals becoming radicalised into a Salafist-jihadist mindset involves creating the identity of a person which is based on a 'puritanical interpretation of Islam that imbues the individual with a sense of moral and spiritual superiority, setting him/her aside from the rest of society'.[273]

Sadek Hamid compliments this assertion by stating that those who joined the Salafi *da'wa* movement in Britain meant 'acquiring membership of a multi-ethnic supranational identity'.[274] Quintan Wiktorowicz's study on al Muhajiroun provides a relevant and confirmatory example of this theory discussion. According to his research, most of those who eventually became members of al Muhajiroun experienced a serious identity crisis prior to their initial stages of participation.[275] He highlights how

> individuals were trapped between two competing socialisation environments: a) secular British society and institutions that proposed equity but in reality offered discrimination; and b) the traditional home with its passive religious values and narrow focus on the Muslim community and rituals.[276]

---

[272] Seth J. Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel & Alan S. Waterman "Terrorism" p.540.
[273] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", pp.67-91.
[274] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of Authentic Islam" p.391.
[275] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause: Al Muhajiroun and Radical Islam", p.15 available at http://www.yale-university.com/polisci/info/conferences/Islamic%20Radicalism/papers/wiktorowicz-paper.pdf (last accessed 04 December 2014).
[276] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause", p.15.

Complimenting al Raffie's previous assertion, an al Muhajiroun member was found to think about their identity in terms of religion rather than ethnicity.[277]

Group Identity

According to Jerrold M. Post, 'one of the first prerequisites for terrorism is collectivism, that is, prioritising the group over the individual'.[278] In societies characterised by a predominance of collectivism over individualism, social identity takes precedence over personal identity.[279] Berman and Laitin in their research on suicide bombers argue that members of radical organisations exhibit self-sacrificial behaviours due to a belief that the suicide mission will benefit their a) the community and/or; b) some larger cause.[280] Group standards, Hogg et.al. suggest, ultimately become 'the blueprint for the individual's identity and subsequent behavior; the individual is "de-personalised"'.[281] Kruglanski argues that radicalisation mandates a high commitment to the communal objectives and ideology of the group, and a low commitment to personal gains or alternative means of achieving objectives.[282] Similarly, al Raffie highlights how self-categorisation theory suggests that the adoption of this collective identity by a group member will trump one's personal, individual identity, as he/she becomes an extension of the collective whole.[283] Rogers et.al. argue that

> when a valued social identity is perceived to be under threat from another group (e.g. when Islam is perceived to be under threat from 'the West') then those who identify strongly will tend to derogate and hold negative views towards the group posing the

[277] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause", p.17.
[278] Jerrold M. Post, "When Hatred is Bred in the Bone: Psycho-Cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism, *Political Psychology,* 62, (2005), pp.615-636.
[279] Marwan Dwairy, "Culturally Sensitive Education: Adapting Self-Orientated Assertiveness Training to Collective Minorities," *Journal of Social Issues,* 60, (2004), pp.423-436.
[280] Eli Berman and David D. Laitin, "Religion, Terrorism and Public Goods: Testing the Club Model" *Journal of Public Economics* 92:10 (2008) pp.1942-1967.
[281] Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 58:4, (1995), p.261.
[282] Arie W Kruglanski et al., "The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism," *Political Psychology,* 35 (2014), p. 84.
[283] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", p.77.

> threat. Because the social identity becomes a part of the self-concept, then a threat to the group is a threat to self.[284]

Sadek Hamid's research on Salafism and British Muslim youth discovered that membership of a *jama'a* (association) provided the 'strong friendship networks that are a by-product of group identity'.[285] What is striking in the most recent years is public discourse on the *Ummah,* this concept of a global community or group of Muslims. While this author does not contest the idea of Muslims identifying with Muslims, it is the persuasiveness of the concept of the *Ummah* in seemingly mobilising and providing a transnational identity and commonality that is of interest to this project. The Muslim community in Britain is different to the Muslim community in the USA and the Muslim community in France. But as illustrated previously, the Muslim community is interpreted by some as a global collective or imagined community. An imagined community is not devoid of reality, but in this instance the imagined community of the *Ummah* is a powerful source of identity for a large population dispersed globally, of varying ethnicities and with different political and social agendas.

"Us Versus Them"

As the individual becomes more embedded with the group and indeed becomes an extension of it and its identity, social identity theory holds that nearly all groups possess the implicit (or increasingly) explicit belief that they are in some way unique or superior to others.[286] This assertion leads to the question of identity in this context being fundamentally a question of "us versus them" and how this may be critical to the Salafist-Jihadist ideology. Social categories it is held, define imaginary boundaries, and they are 'inherently discriminatory — though not necessarily negatively so — as they constitute norms and values that describe membership criteria and consequently set themselves apart from other social categories'.[287]

[284] Brooke Rogers, Kate M. Loewenthal, Christopher Alan Lewis, Richard Amlot, Marco Cinnirella and Humayan Ansari "The Role of Religious Fundamentalism in Terrorist Violence: A Social Psychological Analysis" *International Review of Psychiatry,* 19:3, (2007), pp.253-262.
[285] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of Authentic Islam", p.391.
[286] Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour" pp.7-24.
[287] Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories" p.259.

Turner elaborated on the categorisation process in groups through his development of "self- categorization" theory, a cognitive process whereby individuals strengthen their social identity by emphasising intra-group similarities and intergroup similarities.[288] According to Charles Perdue et.al. favouritism for the ingroup is so powerful that its effects can be elicited simply by the language we use.[289] His research found 'that subtly priming ingroup pronouns such as *we, us,* and *ours* triggered positive emotions in participants, while outgroup pronouns such as *they, them,* and *theirs* elicited negative emotions'.[290] This is a significant finding for the study of how narratives may motivate an individual.

Furthermore, social identity theory holds that one's own group – the ingroup – may often be threatened when outgroups – groups regarded as standing in opposition to the ingroup – are perceived to be encroaching on the ingroup's physical or psychological territory.[291] An underlying assumption in terrorism studies is that a perception of threat to Islam is one of the main triggers of identity crises in Muslim youth.[292] From the perspective of a young person in crisis, the perceived threat appears to bind the *Ummah* even closer together, no matter how dispersed their locations.

A question which arose in the course of this chapter was, if the Salafi-Jihadist movement resembles more of an "identity" movement than a religious one? Research by J.M. Berger found that 'identity movements are oriented toward establishing the legitimacy of a collective group' which are organised on the basis of religion or other prima facie commonalities. He revealed that 'movements become extreme when the in-group's demand for legitimacy escalates to the point it can only

[288] John C. Turner, *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987); John C. Turner, "Social Categorization and the Self-Concept"pp.77-122.
[289] Douglas Kennrick, Steven L. Neuberg and Robert B. Cialdini *Social Psychology: Goals in Interaction* (Sixth Edition) (New York: Pearson, 2014) p.153.
[290] Charles W. Perdue, John F. Dovidio, Michael B. Gurtman and Richard B. Tyler "Us and Them: Social Categorization and the Process of Intergroup Bias" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59:3, (1990), pp.475-486.
[291] Rupert Brown, "Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems, and Future Challenges", *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 30, (2000) pp.745-778.
[292] Dina Al Raffie "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora," p.79.

be satisfied at the expense of an out-group'.[293] The current position of Salafi-Jihadist groups worldwide is to employ a violent hostility to the "out-group" which fuels their legitimacy as they demonstrate their perceived puritanical legitimacy.[294]

Social identity theory highlights the need of the social collective for legitimacy, which serves to protect the community. When the existence of an identity group is challenged, members may respond by seeking out justifications for the in-group's existence. These justifications may be more elaborate for "imagined communities," that are defined by their conceptual nature rather than bounded by physical limits and interpersonal relationships, which is particularly true for the Salafi-Jihadi community who are dispersed globally.[295] Anderson argued that communities based on nation, race or religion are highly (or wholly) conceptual and particularly prone to volatility in their search for such legitimacy. This need for legitimacy can therefore spiral out of control when an identity collective turns toward extremism.

Identity is What?

Identity is multifaceted and is about associating and affiliating rather than having a predetermined definition of who a person is. People everywhere and always have particular ties, self-understandings, stories, trajectories, histories, predicaments, and as such these inform the sorts of claims they make and communicate often via a narrative vehicle.[296] Therefore, we are not referring to an autonomous object but a process by which social actors recognise themselves.[297] In constructing one's own identity, individuals are assessed to attribute coherence and meaning to the various phases of their own public and private history.[298]Gilroy insists that 'identity provides

[293] J.M. Berger "Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define In-Group and Out-Group Dynamics" ICCT, April 2017, p.3.
[294] Quintan Wiktorowicz "A Genealogy of Radical Islam" p.81.
[295] Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2006) p.5-6.
[296] Rogers Brubaker & Frederick Cooper "Beyond Identity" *Theory and Society* 29, 2000, pp.1-47, p.34.
[297] Alberto Melucci "The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements" *Social Research* 52, 2000, pp.781–816; Alberto Melucci *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper "Collective Identity and Social Movements" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), pp. 283-305; Jeff Goodwin et.al. "Why Emotions Matter" in *Passionate Politics: Emotions and Social Movements*, Jeff Goodwin, James M. Jasper, and Francesca Polletta, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), pp.1-24, p.8-9.
[298] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Second Edition)

a way of understanding the interplay between our subjective experience of the world and the cultural and historical settings in which that fragile subjectivity is formed'.[299] Hence the individual would be unable to create an identity in complete isolation of their social and cultural context.

Matt Venhaus reviewed interview reports from 2,032 foreign fighters detained by Coalition forces in Iraq, Afghanistan and Guantanamo Bay in order to ascertain a motivational typology for foreign fighters. He concluded 'the recurring theme was that they all were looking for something – they wanted to understand who they are why they matter, and what their role in the world should be. They have an unfulfilled need to define themselves'.[300] This finding complements the findings of Thomas Precht whose attempt to understand a person's pathway to joining a foreign fight proposed that the most influential factor was 'background' which included personal struggles with identity, experience of injustice or discrimination and the need for belonging coupled with a lack of social integration.[301]

In accepting that social identity theory is founded on the notion of social processes, further examination is required to examine how these processes may operate. It is believed that Stahelski's research into social psychological conditioning is useful in this research as he identified a five-stage process employed by terrorists which aimed has at every juncture relevance to the individual's identity.[302]

> Phase 1—Depluralisation: stripping away all other group member identities
> Phase 2—Self-deindividuation: stripping away each member's personal identity
> Phase 3—Other-deindividuation: stripping away the personal identities of enemies
> Phase 4—Dehumanisation: identifying enemies as subhuman or nonhuman

---

(Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) p.96; James Jasper *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[299] Paul Gilroy "Diaspora and the Detours of Identity" in Kathryn Woodward (ed.) *Identity and Difference* (London: Sage Publications, 1997) pp.299-243, p.301-302.

[300] John Vehnaus *Why Youth Join al Qaeda* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, May 2010) available at https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR236Venhaus.pdf (last accessed 18 November 2014).

[301] Tomas Precht, Home Grown Terrorism and Islamist Radicalization in Europe: From Conversion to Terrorism (Copenhagen: Danish Ministry of Defense, 2007).

[302] Anthony Stahelski "Terrorists Are Made Not Born: Creating Terrorists Using Social Psychological Conditioning" *Cultic Studies Review* 4:1 (2005), pp.30-40, p.32.

Phase 5—Demonisation: identifying enemies as evil[303]

Writing over a century ago, William James believed that human beings are prone toward plurality, and that we have many identities that can be adopted or dispensed of over a lifetime.[304] Burke and Saets contend that an individual's multiplicity of identities is correlated with the increased complexity within societies and how society has become more differentiated in terms of groups, organisation, and roles.[305] Conventional wisdom suggests that the management of often perceived competing identities could pose difficulties for individuals, as their social interactions may produce a new premium identity that is incompatible with their existing ones. In their research on participation in justice and peace movements and how this correlated with the concept of identity, Hunt and Benford found that 'identity talk can rely on a universe of discourse that allows for multiple identity alignment interpretations and expressions'.[306]

Given the strict separation between church and state in Western democracies, Muslims are described as being conscious of the fact that public displays of religiosity are contrary to mainstream views that perceive acts of religiosity or religion to be a private affair.[307] With the plausible subsequent feeling of little or no connection with their nation and exclusion from mainstream society, this may lead certain individuals to retreat to religion as a means of affirming what they potentially feel to be a 'threatened self-identity'.[308] Modern society exerts its own pressures on the formation of identity and a combination of socioeconomic and structural factors may rouse feelings of disaffection towards one's home country, thereby creating a psychological barrier between the individual and their feeling of being able to fully identify as a national. Dalgaard-Nielsen refers to this situation as creating a 'double

[303] Anthony Stahelski "Terrorists Are Made Not Born" p.33.
[304] William James *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1890).
[305] Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Saets *Identity Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) p.131.
[306] Scott A. Hunt & Robert D. Benford "Identity Talk in the Peace and Justice Movement" *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 22:4, (1994), pp.488-517, p.496.
[307] Alex Wilner & Claire- Jehanne Dubouloz "Homegrown Terrorism and Transformative Learning: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Understanding Radicalization," *Global Change, Peace and Security* 22:1 (2010), pp.33-51, p.41.
[308] Catarina Kinnvall "Globalization and Religious Nationalism: Self, Identity, and the Search for Ontological Security" *Political Psychology* 25:5 (2004), pp. p.742.

sense of non-belonging'.[309]

Identity-Stripping

In Stahelski's research, the first two phases seek to erase an individual's existing identities in favour of reconditioning with the group's all-consuming, exclusive identity. Terrorist groups, it is argued, cannot effectively condition joiners unless the group is the joiners' only group affiliation. An individual who has only one group affiliation has a self-concept and self-esteem that are totally dependent on retaining membership in that group. It is suggested in the literature that social identities provide status and enhance (or not as the case may be) self-esteem and that humans have a 'need for self-esteem'.[310] It is plausible therefore to assume that people with low self-esteem will be even more eager to engage in activities that are likely to raise self-esteem.[311] The completely dependent individual is therefore assessed by Stahelski 'to be willing to do whatever it takes to retain membership in the group'.[312]

The concept of identity-stripping raises an interesting question for those converts, who are already potentially striving to affirm their new status as Muslims within a community of similar people and whose self-concept and self-esteem is dependent on their retaining group membership. In a discussion on the narratives of male converts in the UK, the dilemma of the convert in managing their identity is described as the convert holding 'to a rope which is in constant motion in these two directions (past and present), threatening to hobble him in his endeavour to keep his person intact'.[313] An example of the identity stripping process is most evident in the convert who commonly assumes a new name or nomme de guerre.[314] While

[309] Anja Dalgaard-Nielsen "Violent Radicalization in Europe: What We Know and What We Do Not Know" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 33:9 (2010), pp.797-814, p.800.
[310] Judith A. Howard "Social Psychology of Identities" in *Annual Review of Sociology,* 2000, pp.367-393, p.369; Barry R. Schlenker, Impression Management: The Self-Concept, Social Identity, and Interpersonal Relations (California: Brooks/Cole, 1980) p.88.
[311] Mark R. Leary & Robin M. Kowalski "Impression Management: A Literature Review and Two Component Model" *Psychological Bulletin* 107:1, (1990) pp.34-47, p.40.
[312] Anthony Stahelski "Terrorists Are Made Not Born" p.32.
[313] Yasir Suleiman 'Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain: Male Perspectives', University of Cambridge (2013), available at: http://www.cis.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/narratives_of_conversion_report.pdf last accessed 15 November 2019.
[314] Daniel Benjamin 'The Convert's Zeal: Why Are So Many Jihadists Converts to Islam?'

conversion to Islam is not an indicator of future propensity for violence or terrorism, Silber and Bhatt point out in their discussion of converts 'their need to prove their religious convictions to their companions often makes them the most aggressive'.[315] A briefing paper released by the ICCT in June 2016 concluded, cautiously, by saying that information available supports the hypothesis of convert overrepresentation in foreign fighter activities.[316] Furthermore, statistically speaking, in 2017, it was estimated that converts make up 4 percent of the UK population but constitute 12 percent of home-grown jihadists.[317] The correlation between a convert's identity stripping, assuming a new all-consuming group identity and participation in violence is tenuous given the absence of strong data to support or negate the theory but worthy of mention here.

In Groups and Out Groups

Phase 3, other-deindividuation, parallels joiner self-deindividuation. According to Stahelski we categorize our social world into those who are in the same groups as we are ("in" groups, "us") and those who are not in our groups ("others," "out" groups, "them"). To persuade people that they are one; that they compromise a bounded, distinctive solidarity group; that their internal differences do not matter, at least for the purpose at hand – this is normal and necessary part of politics, and not only of what is ordinarily characterised as "identity politics".[318] The narrative of European foreign fighters in their social media engagements was often discovered to include reference to "us" and "them" as illustrated below in this social media post captured by Site Intel.

Brookings Institute, 07 September 2007, available at https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-converts-zeal-why-are-so-many-jihadists-converts-to-islam/ (last accessed 13 February 2019).

[315] Mitchell D. Silber and Arvin Bhatt "Radicalization in the West: The Homegrown Threat" *New York City Police Department*, 2007 p. 31.

[316] Bart Schuurman, Peter Grol & Scott Flower "Converts and Islamist Terrorism"; Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann (Eds), *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*, (ICCT: The Hague, 2016), p.52.

[317] 'Converts to Islam are likelier to radicalise than native Muslims', *The Economist*, 1 April 2017, available at: http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21719833-britain-converts-make-up-less-4-muslims-12-home-grown-jihadists-converts (last accessed 4 February 2019).

[318] Rogers Brubaker & Frederick Cooper "Beyond Identity" *Theory and Society,* 29 (2000), pp.1-47, p.34.

People join movements not (only) because they think they can achieve their goals, but because the experience affords them the possibility of becoming recognised as a specific kind of person and as a member of a broader entity that shares similar values, interests, world views, or affective solidarity-ties—whether this notion of identity is pre-existing or whether it emerges in the context of on-going activity.[319] Reference to identity is essential in order to understand the mechanisms underlying individuals' decisions to become involved in collective action.[320] To identify with a movement according to Della Porta and Diani, entails feelings of solidarity towards people to whom one is not usually linked by direct personal contacts, but with whom one nonetheless shares aspirations and values.[321] The *Ummah* facilitates such remote contact and the notion that the global community of Muslims is as one, in spite of significantly disparate geographical, socio-economic and political circumstances.

[319] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Second Edition) (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) p.92; Verta Taylor & Nancy Whittier "Collective Identity in Social Movement Communities" in Carol McClung Mueller and Aldon D. Morris *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) pp.104-129.
[320] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements* p.100.
[321] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements* p.95.

Della Porta and Diani contend that 'the presence of feelings of identity and of collective solidarity makes it easier to face the risks and uncertainties related to collective action'.[322] A large proportion of foreign fighter social media engagement involving the use of imagery displays various weaponry, military-style clothing and general necessities for combat which this author interprets to be purposeful on two counts. Firstly, it is to inform the consumer that they will be a member of the group, as uniformity of clothing is crucial to military/paramilitary identity. And secondly, being a member of the group you will face potentially fatal consequences, as to be armed implies physical danger.

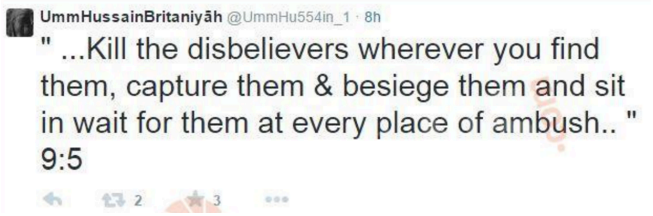
> Feeling part of a shared endeavor and identifying one's own interests not only at the individual level but also at the collective level makes costs and risks more acceptable than they would otherwise have been. Physical risks and material deprivation, hardly rational from an individualistic, short-term perspective, may be justified if looked at as the costs attached to carrying on a longer-term historical project.[323]

The demonstration of personal and collective identity alignment at times is discussed in terms of what the individual and group are not. Howard stresses that because as individuals we are motivated to evaluate ourselves positively, people 'tend to evaluate positively those groups to which they belong and to discriminate against groups they perceive to pose a threat to their social identity'.[324] But it leads to the question, if strong identification with a group can be correlated with out-group hostility? In making identifications an individual or group sets up boundaries and these boundaries and these boundaries determine who is 'in' and who is 'out', thus identity or identifying becomes relational, constructed against an 'other' or a set of 'others'. Dawson and Amarasingam's interviews with foreign fighters in Syria noted that interactions they had recorded were 'laced with comments about the need to be strict in observing the differences between true Muslims and others'.[325]

---

[322] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements* p.94.
[323] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements* p.102.
[324] Judith A. Howard "Social Psychology of Identities" in *Annual Review of Sociology, (*2000), pp.367-393, p.369.
[325] Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam "Talking to Foreign Fighters" p.202.

Social identity theory maintains that it is identification that causes out-group bias.[326] As the individual becomes more embedded with the group and indeed becomes an extension of it and its identity, social identity theory holds that nearly all groups possess the implicit (or increasingly) explicit belief that they are in some way unique or superior to others.[327] Many terrorist groups identify certain "out" groups as enemies. The membership is then conditioned to deindividuate members of the enemy group. One school of thought is that there is a correlation between "us versus them" thinking and absolutist religious belief systems, wherein those adherents advance the view that the world is divided into believers and nonbelievers. This thinking subsequently provides the justification for efforts to convert, subjugate, or eliminate those identified as nonbelievers.[328] This is illustrative in the tweet below which emanated from the wife of a popular British foreign fighter, who operated his propaganda machine while he was on the battlefield. Note the repetitious use of the term "them".



Enemy deindividuation includes giving up any personal relationships with enemy group members, knowing or referring to any enemies by individual name, or distinguishing any individual attributes or characteristics among enemy members. All enemies become a homogeneous, faceless mass: they all look alike, think alike, and act alike. Under these circumstances and conditions, the construction of identity therefore implies both a positive definition of those participating in a certain group, and a negative identification of those who are not only excluded but also actively opposed.[329] The word *kuffar* or disbelievers is an all-inclusive derogatory term that summarises well the enemy deindividation referred to.

---

[326] Judith A. Howard "Social Psychology of Identities" p.370.
[327] Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour" pp.7-24.
[328] Seth J. Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel & Alan S. Waterman "Terrorism" p.541.
[329] Donatella Della Porta & Mario Diani *Social Movements* p.94; Alain Touraine *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Alberto Melucci

Stahelski contends that all of his five phases, are achieved or facilitated by the presence of the charismatic leader, whom he appears to imply is a physical presence. This raises the question as to whether this model accurately applies to foreign fighters and those whose radicalisation is now commonly processed and facilitated via online means. Perhaps, given Stahelski's research is not specific to a particular type of terrorism and more based on comparisons with cults, it is therefore ripe for review in the context of online means of pathways to terrorism through radicalisation and would be a valuable area for further research. It is not possible to disprove that the internet facilitates sufficient virtual connection with such charismatic leaders however, this does not imply that social networking sites (SNS) have replaced the physical presence of a groups leader. Unlike groups such as Aum Shinrikyo where its members had the geographic disposition and small membership that would have potentially facilitated actual interaction with the group's leader Shoko Asahara, ISIS's or similar violent jihadist groups in Syria are widely dispersed and therefore British volunteers would be highly unlikely to ever physically encounter a member of the core leadership

Impression Management and Self-Presentation

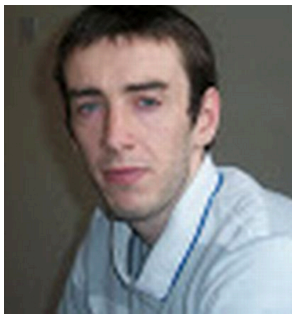
A range of literature demonstrates that there is the potential for a degree of production and creativity in how one portrays themselves, especially online. Writing many decades ago, Erving Goffman proffered that personal and collective identities are products of impression management work.[330] In his work Goffman uses the metaphor of an actor performing a role in a play to explain how people communicate or express messages to an audience. Goffman notes, 'the very structure of the self can be seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances'.[331] Social media and in particular social networking sites (SNS) have had a significant impact on self-presentation to an audience. They provide ample

Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Belinda Robnett "External Political Events and Collective Identity" in David Meyer, Nancy Whittier, and Belinda Robnett (eds.) *Social Movements: Identity, Culture, and the State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp.287–301.

[330] Erving Goffman *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959).

[331] Erving Goffman *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* p.252.

opportunities to fashion desirable and often misleading impressions as users have more control over their self-presentational behaviour than in face-to face communication, and therefore they provide an ideal setting for precise impression management. The example of Eamonn Bradley from Co. Derry in Northern Ireland exemplifies how he transformed his identity from what can be judged to be an average office worker to medieval-style combatant online. In the image on the right, Bradley's presentation is akin to a Lawrence of Arabia-like character demonstrating the power that social media's imagery affords in self-presentation. Prior to his departure for Syria Bradley used social media to research the fighting, convert to Islam and make contact with people who told him how to get there.




People engage in self-presentation as a means of creating their identities. One of the most illustrative cases of online impression management and self-presentation strategies is the peculiar case of the Indian business man Mehdi Masroor Biswas based in Bangalore which assumed the handle @ShamiWitness for use on Twitter. The ICSR report which examined how foreign fighters in Syria receive information about the conflict and who inspires them identified Biwas' Twitter as the most-followed[332] and after his arrest he was described as 'the single most important English language disseminator of Islamic State propaganda'.[333] Interestingly, when interviewed by Channel 4 news, the Indian businessman did not refer to himself as Shami Witness, but referred to his assumed Twitter identity in the third person, and when arrested by police his actual appearance varied drastically from his Twitter

[332] Joseph Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter Neumann, #Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks, *ICSR,* 01 April 2014, p.18.
[333] Shiraz Maher "Shami Witness unmasked: 'I will not resist arrest'", *Channel 4 News*, available at http://www.channel4.com/news/police-bangalore-islamic-state-twitter-shami-witness (last accessed 12 December 2014).

profile picture. This disseminator (as he would be categorised by ICSR's research) appears to have become embedded in the virtual community of ISIS Twitter supporters by assuming a different persona, and is illustrative of the self-presentation concept introduced in the opening chapter.

According to eminent sociologist, Mead, identity is ultimately imitative from society, people sometimes "self-symbolise", that is, engage in public behaviours that indicate the possession of identity-relevant characteristics. A pertinent example of this referred to in the previous chapter is the index finger salute common in foreign fighter imagery posted online. This symbol of *Tawheed* is assumed to be utilised in many cases without the actual knowledge of what it means in Islamic literature and scholarship.

The Dichotomous British-Muslim Identity

At a sociological level, the definition of Muslim identity becomes very difficult because of the immense diversity amongst Muslims. Similar to the terms British or Bangladeshi, the term Muslim encompasses so many different identity

characteristics and variations that it needs further elaboration to be meaningful. While it is the religion that makes a Muslim a Muslim and not their culture, some scholars seek to shift the focus to cultural practices and intricacies of following the Islamic faith. Tufyal Choudhury's research on British Muslims and the identity choices that are available to them found that Jihadi narratives and state responses to them have produced a dichotomy between "good" and "bad" Muslims that has challenged young British Muslims' self-perceptions.[334]

Sadek Hamid's research informs us that the 1990s were the defining era for second-generation Islamic revival and activism in the UK.[335] Those who joined the Salafi *da'wa* movement in Britain meant 'acquiring membership of a multi-ethnic supranational identity'.[336]

> Membership of a jama῾a (association) provided the strong friendship networks that are a by-product of group identity, and are especially important for Muslim youth keen to escape racism and feel part of something bigger than themselves. These informal networks provided opportunities to develop an Islamic identity…[337]

Quintan Wiktorowicz's study on al Muhajiroun provides a relevant and confirmatory example of this. According to his research, most of those who eventually became members of al Muhajiroun experienced a serious identity crisis prior to their initial stages of participation, and that subsequent to the process of deindividuation an al Muhajiroun member was found to think about their identity in terms of religion.[338] The adoption of this collective identity by the group member has resulted in he/she now becoming an extension of the collective whole.[339]

Mohammed Sidique Khan, one of the perpetrators of the 7th July bombings in London in 2005 claimed in his subsequent martyrdom video that his actions were in retaliation for "the bombing, gassing, imprisonment and torture of my people."

---

[334] Tufyal Choudhary quoted in Emmanuel Karagiannis "Defining and Understanding the Jihadi-Salafi Movement", p.189.
[335] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of Authentic Islam" p.390.
[336] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of Authentic Islam" p.391.
[337] Sadek Hamid "The Attraction of Authentic Islam" p.391.
[338] Quintan Wiktorowicz, "Joining the Cause: Al-Muhajiroun and Radical Islam." Paper presented at "The Roots of Islamic Radicalism"Conference, Yale University, (May 8-9, 2004), http://yale.edu/polisci/info/conferences/Islamic%20Radicalism/papers/wiktorowicz-paper.pdf p.17.
[339] Dina Al Raffie, "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Diaspora", p.77.

However, Shiraz Maher interrogates this by questioning how Khan came to identify with the people of Iraq, a country whose native language he could not speak and that he had never visited. Khan was born in Leeds, the son of Pakistani immigrant parents, who was a university graduate and active in his local community assisting in the teaching of disadvantaged children.[340] Therefore, on first glance at least four individual identities can be identified i.e. first generation British; Pakistani heritage; university graduate and; youth and community worker. Maher accounts for the reason that Khan identified with the people in Iraq during his last testament video by suggesting that there is an inextricable link between radicalisation and identity, and that it is this same identity and belonging nexus that accounts for the foreign fighter movement today.[341] The research by Hunt and Benford could assist in interpreting Mohammed Sidique Khan's claims in that they identify 'atrocity tales' as being important in the construction of the person's personal identity and the need to convey that the person does not support injustices but rather is sensitive to the victims and their plight and takes action to end their suffering.[342]

Conclusion

Hunt and Benford's research found that participants' accounts of entry into peace and justice movements was often characterised by 'disillusionment anecdotes…a type of take that follows a formula of "once I was blind, but now I can see"'.[343] What

[340] UK Government *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings London on 7th July 2005* p.13 available at https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/228837/1087.pdf (last accessed 12 May 2017)
[341] Shiraz Maher "ICSR Insight – The roots of radicalisation? It's identity, stupid".
[342] Scott A. Hunt & Robert D. Benford "Identity Talk in the Peace and Justice Movement" p.499-500.
[343] Scott A. Hunt & Robert D. Benford "Identity Talk in the Peace and Justice Movement" p.497.

has been illustrated thus far is that movement identities involve fostering esprit de corps, create the conditions for increasing self-esteem, and define in-group/out-group relationships.[344] This chapter, more so than the others, asks the fundamental question of *why* an individual would become a foreign fighter, as it involves assuming a different identity. There are divergent opinions in the literature but the evidence suggests that there is reasonable reason to argue that an identity crisis or cognitive opening, as Wiktorowicz would describe, is responsible for the initial steps taken toward a violent pathway. Quantifying this is almost impossible as it is a psycho-social process at play. However, with the assistance of narrative communication, a terrorist group can utilise identity-stripping and deindividuation in their attempt to co-opt a person into their group. The co-optee's employment of impression management and self-presentation skills while marking out their group versus the others is evident in a hostile manner in ISIS social media. The markers of an identity correlated with Salafist-Jihadist ideology is also evident in social media imagery which demonstrates the fighters in various poses and attires which reflect their commitment to this particular cause.

[344] Scott A. Hunt & Robert D. Benford "Identity Talk in the Peace and Justice Movement" p.490.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that narratives are crucial elements of identity formation as they provide coherent and brief explanations about who 'we' are, where we come from and where we are heading, and they define who the 'other' is.[345] Master narratives it has been demonstrated, can affect an individuals' perception of themselves, leading to changes in self-conception, particularly when individuals identify with a character.[346] The individual, we have seen, has a place in the narrative process, they adjust stories to fit their own identities, and they will tailor "reality" to fit their stories.[347] In some instances, exposure to a narrative was demonstrated to have involved deep immersion into the story and events, and identification with the protagonists in a process referred to as transportation into the narrative world.

A key driver of Salafi-Jihadi violence is political imaginary associated with a global imagined community, and it is this which is the most significant finding in the research. These Salafi-Jihadis identify with and feel part of the *Ummah*, which is a brotherhood and sisterhood of geographically and ethnically diversified people with whom they can identify closely. By joining such a transnational entity, they find a larger-than-life cause: they are involved in an open-ended religious conflict between the *Ummah* and its perceived enemies which has scant regard for traditional Westphalian borders. Indeed, a new transnational identity has been constructed. For those who have travelled to conflict zones, in their eyes, this experience alone confirms the existence of an embattled *Ummah*, which needs their support and dedication. In effect, it can be argued that Salafi-Jihadism is an unintended side effect of globalisation, which has created a new class of international warriors with loyalty only to their imagined *Ummah*.

---

[345] Alexander Spencer, *Romantic Narratives in International Politics: Pirates, Rebels and Mercenaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016) pp. 28-32.
[346] Marc Sestir and Melanie C. Green, "You are What You Watch: Identification and Transportation Effects on Temporary Self-Concept" *Social Influence* 54:3 (2010) pp.272-288.
[347] Margaret Somers "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A relational and network approach" *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994) p.618.

The impact which social media and in particular Twitter had on the Syrian conflict has yet to be fully determined. But from existing literature we are led to believe that events and functionalities conspired to make it 'an ideal place for violent extremists to operate'.[348] Given the body of literature highlighted in this thesis, which suggests that imagery can evoke a visceral response that is absent of text, the representation of Salafi-Jihadi's narratives in Syria were often more communicative in their pictures alone. One of the most common images observed was their conveying of one of the most fundamental beliefs in Islam, Tawhid, through one-fingered posing for example.

The debate which exists as to the role of ideology and religiosity in UK foreign fighter recruitment is likely to rumble on for some time. There is certainly convincing evidence for both sides of the debate in the existing literature. Recalling Thomas Precht's research which attempted to understand a person's trajectory and motivations to partake in a foreign fight, he identified opportunity factors. There were a number of opportunity factors which also played an important part and were not examined in this project, such as the availability of low-cost air travel and visa-free travel to Syria circa 2012-2015.

Limitations/Weaknesses of this Study

What this project aimed to achieve was shine a light on a very specific area of research, the social media use of foreign fighters to convey narratives of Salafi-Jihadism, while also reviewing existing literature on the specific topic of empirical research. A shortcoming of this approach, as mentioned above, was that the primary sources were likely to be skewed given that de-classified intelligence has confirmed that foreign fighters had their internet connectivity removed on arrival until basic training was complete. Therefore any commentary arising after their indoctrination was completed was liable to be replete with Salafi-Jihadist ideology and religiosity in keeping with the master narrative of Salafi-Jihadi groups in Syria. Notwithstanding this, the project in certain sections weighted for this by drawing on more secondary

[348] Charlie Winter "Documenting the Virtual 'Caliphate'" p.11.

resources to compliment the primary data. What has been achieved is an exposition of how British Salafi-Jihadis conducted themselves in Syria on social media, how they engaged in self-presentation, espoused the collective group identity while denigrating the disbelievers.

To elevate the status of such research, more primary detail should be gathered where possible. Furthermore, to gain a more complete and representative sample, an effort should be made to expand beyond English language only content. I was fortunate by the fact that there was an abundance of published material available to capitalise on, but that is not a substitute for more primary research being undertaken

King's College London provided an enviable environment for a terrorist researcher during the height of the Syrian conflict. The presence of the ICSR contributed to the status of the University as being a centre of excellence in researching the British foreign fighter phenomenon. It is with regret that I was not able to engage more in this community with the exception of ad hoc conference attendances. Of particular assistance to my studies was the European Union-funded academic research network VOX-Pol, formed in the summer of 2014, and while I engaged in their conferences, my research would probably have benefitted from attending their summer schools in the years since, where they specifically discussed topics such violent online radicalisation, ethics in terrorism research, and the challenges of online Jihadism beyond the English language.

Recommendations for future research

While I limited this study to analysing text and images, YouTube in particular, deserves a study of its own, given the high prominence of the videos posted on that site in the conflict. While one of my pieces of primary research referred to "Jihadi John", the narratives contained in videos that were captured which featured Mohammed Emwazi, known more widely by his nomme de guerre are rich data sources for future research, given his status as a British citizen and home-grown terrorist. Furthermore, the example of Jihadi John's rise to prominence in August

2014 best illustrates the need to be reactive and prepared to adapt the research question as events are unfolding. When I formulated this research project Jihadi John was unknown. Another area worthy of further research, which was briefly referred to in this project surrounds converts representation among foreign fighters, and in the context of Britain, would make for potentially a very impacting contribution.

Anyone who wishes to engage in research in a similar way as I did in a future conflict will undoubtedly face the challenges presented by encrypted communications. Lessons learned from Syria and Iraq will inform those willing to travel and participate in a conflict beyond their own borders that social media engagement can lead to prosecution on terrorism offences in your home country after the fact. Furthermore, the technology companies have increased their capability in content moderation in recent years and its unlikely to see a repeat of the open communications seen from Syria. Any researcher will require training and also a cautious approach to accessing data from encrypted and potentially compromised or surveilled platforms.

Policy Recommendations

The importance of a public private partnership in this space, particularly in my place of domicile, Ireland is a key policy recommendation. Dublin as host to the EMEA headquarters of companies such as Twitter, Facebook, Google, Microsoft, results in a high concentration of expertise located herein that is not being leveraged by the public sector. Establishing a forum under Chatham House Rules where both groups could share their experiences would have been ideal, but given the secretive nature of the state agencies charged with protecting national security, even workshops ran by the tech firms would have possibly been a more palatable first start.

The academic community have proven their capability to make sound policy recommendations grounded in empirical research findings. Having spent a significant amount of time on the “policy-maker” side of the academic/policy-maker divide, and dabbled in the academic side, I would have to compel those who engage in research to make it as accessible as possible to policy makers, which I understand can be

difficult or even unpalatable, but journal articles are, more often than not, in my opinion deemed too inaccessible to policy makers. That's not to suggest a wanton abandon of the system in place, but perhaps by writing op-eds for newspapers or actively engaging in public consultation sessions will attempt to bridge the divide, real or perceived. In the UK for example, the ICSR's engagement with the BBC and the Guardian made their work accessible to mainstream readership and informed public debate. Furthermore, the use of social media platforms such as Twitter, and even LinkedIn by academics to comment on public policy or global events is a step towards making their valued contributions accessible to a wider audience.

In Ireland, the more systemic issue is the absence of a home office equivalent in which contributes to the lack of a unified and centralised approach to issues of security and intelligence. The equivalent in the UK provides an umbrella under which groups such as UK's Office for Security and Counter Terrorism, Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, the Research and Information Unit and even the security services must operate beneath allows for better coordination of effort and intelligence sharing. A competent authority would be in a strong position to engage with the private sector based in the country, which has been severely lacking.

Final Thoughts

While European intelligence and security chiefs remain deeply concerned at the prospect of these fighters returning home and bringing with them their violent means and ideology, as researchers we should be focussing on their life after the battlefield from a social psychological perspective: i.e. who do the fighters associate with on return home, how religious is their appearance and language, and fundamentally, do they ascribe to the notion that the Caliphate is an achievable goal. The UK has responded to the phenomenon of foreign fighters from Britain travelling to fight in Syria through a range of soft and hard responses and coupled with the Russian intervention in 2015, numbers undertaking the *hijrah* have dwindled substantially. Notwithstanding this 2017 was the bloodiest year on mainland UK arising from Islamist-inspired terrorist attack since 2007, and the recently released

Contest Strategy (4.0) firmly identifies the role that narratives play in the mobilisation of people to terrorist actions

> using pernicious, divisive messaging and amplifying perceived grievances, Daesh and Al Qa'ida exploit the internet to promote warped alternative narratives, urging extremists within our own communities to subvert our way of life through simple, brutal violence.[349]

There is little doubt that the next battleground for Salafi-Jihadist groups will generate its own unique characteristics and that what we saw in Syria and then Iraq is highly unlikely to be repeated. During the time that this project was conducted the Syrian crises evolved beyond initial recognition. When I began the initial scoping in 2013, ISIS did not exist in its current form, and even at that it has changed beyond recognition losing an estimated 97% of the territory it controlled at its peak in 2014. The documentation through social media, particularly Twitter, of the conflict through the eyes of those Britons who made the journey provided researchers and the general public with a unique observatory into a space previously unseen. It was both fascinating and chilling and created the opportunity to ask the "why" as opposed to "how" questions of enlisting to take part in a foreign fight.

[349] UK Government *Contest: The United Kingdom's Strategy for Countering Terrorism* (London: Crown Copyright, 2018) p.7.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Tahir Abbas (Ed.) *Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure* (London: Zed Books, 2005)

H. Porter Abbott *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008)

Max Abrams "What Terrorists Really Want" *International Security* 32:4 (2008) pp. 78-105

Jeffrey C. Alexander *Sociological Theory Since 1945* (London: Hutchinson, 1987)

Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London: Verso, 1983)

Benedict Anderson *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1996)

John Archer (Ed.) *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994)

Margaret Archer *Culture and Agency: The Place of Culture in Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988)

Cristina Archetti "Narrative Wars: Understanding Terrorism in the Era of Global Interconnectedness," in Alister Miskimmon, Ben O'Loughlin, and Laura Roselle (eds) *Forging the World: Strategic Narratives and International Relations* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2013)

Muhammed Ali "The Concept of Umma and the Reality of the Nation-State: A Western and Muslim Discourse" *Kultur: The Indonesian Journal for Muslim Studies,* 2:1, (2002) pp.37-58

Scott Atran "Genesis of Suicide Terrorism" *Science,* 299:5612, (2003) pp.1534-1539

Scott Atran *Statement Before the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities* (10 March 2010)

Akil N. Awan, Andrew Hoskins and Ben O'Loughlin *Radicalisation and Media: Connectivity and Terrorism in the New Media Ecology* (London: Routledge, 2012)

Hyuhn-Suhck Bae "Entertainment-Education and Recruitment of Cornea Donors: The Role of Emotion and Issue Involvement" *Journal of Health Communication,* 13, (2008) pp.20-36

Hyuhn-Suhck Bae & Seok Kang "The Influence of Viewing an Entertainment-Education Program on Cornea Donation Intention: A Test of the Theory of Planned Behavior", *Health Communication,* 23, (2008) pp.87-95

Mona Baker *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Mona Baker "Narratives of Terrorism and Security: 'Accurate', Translations, Suspicious Frames" *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* 3:3 (2010) pp.347-364

Richard Barrett, "Foreign Fighters in Syria," Transcript of Discussion Moderated by Joanne Myers (New York: Carnegie Council for Ethics in International Affairs, 2014), www.soufangroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/06.TSG-Foreign-Fighters-in-Syria.pdf

Rajan Basra, Peter R. Neumann and Claudia Brunner *Criminal Pasts, Terrorist Futures: European Jihadists and the New Crime-Terror Nexus*, ICSR, October 2016

Daniel Benjamin 'The Convert's Zeal: Why Are So Many Jihadists Converts to Islam?' *Brookings Institute*, 07 September 2007, available at https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-converts-zeal-why-are-so-many-jihadists-converts-to-islam/ (last accessed 13 February 2019)

J.M. Berger "Extremist Construction of Identity: How Escalating Demands for Legitimacy Shape and Define InGroup and Out-Group Dynamics" ICCT, April 2017

Eli Berman and David D. Laitin "Religion, Terrorism and Public Goods: Testing the Club Model" *Journal of Public Economics* 92:10 (2008) pp.1942-1967

Daniel Leonard Bernardi, Pauline Hope Cheong, Chris Lundry & Scott W. Ruston *Narrative Landmines: Rumors, Islamist Extremism and the Struggle for Strategic Influence* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2012)

David Betz 'The Virtual Dimension of Contemporary Insurgency and Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 19:4 (2008) pp.510-540

Randy Borum "Radicalisation into Violent Extremism II: A Review of Conceptual Models and Empirical Research" *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4:4 (2011) pp.37-62

Kurt Braddock and James P. Dillard "Meta-Analytic Evidence for the Persuasive Effect of Narratives on Beliefs, Attitudes, Intentions, and Behaviors," *Communication Monographs*, 83:4 (2016), pp.446-476

Kurt Braddock and John Horgan 'Towards a Guide for Constructing and Disseminating Counternarratives to Reduce Support for Terrorism', *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 39:5 (2016), pp.381-404

James Brandon "The Changing-Face of Salafi-Jihadi Movements in the United Kingdom" *CTC Sentinel* 1:2, (2008) pp.4-5

James Brandon & Raffaello Pantucci “UK Islamists and the Arab Uprisings” *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology,* 13, (2012) pp.18-46

Rupert Brown “Social Identity Theory: Past Achievements, Current Problems, and Future Challenges”, *European Journal of Social Psychology,* 30, (2000) pp.745-778

Jerome Bruner *Actual Minds, Possible Worlds* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1986)

Cole Bunzel “From Paper State to Caliphate: The Ideology of the Islamic State” *Brookings Analysis Paper* 19, March 2015

François Burgat *Face to Face with Political Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2005)

Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic “Fictionality and Perceived Realsim in Experiencing Stories: A Model of Narrative Comprehension and Engagement, *Communication Theory,* 18, (2008), pp.255-280

Rick Busselle and Helena Bilandzic “Measuring Narrative Engagement” *Media Psychology*, 12, (2009), pp.321-347

Daniel Byman and Jeremy Shapiro “Be A Little Afraid: The Threat of Terrorism from Western Fireign Fighters in Syria and Iraq” *Foreign Policy at Brookings, Policy Paper Number 34* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institute 2014)

Craig Calhoun *Critical Social Theory,* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995)

Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gertis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff and Indermohan Virk *Contemporary Sociological Theory*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002)

Joseph Carter, Shiraz Maher and Peter Neumann “#Greenbirds: Measuring Importance and Influence in Syrian Foreign Fighter Networks”, *ICSR,* 01 April 2014

Manuel Castells *The Rise of the Network Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)

Hsinchun Chen, Edna Reid, Joshua Sinai, Andrew Silke and Boaz Ganor (Eds.) *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security* (New York: Springer, 2008)

Sonya Dal Cin, Mark P. Zanna and Geoffrey T. Fong “Narrative Persuasion and Overcoming Resistence” in Eric S. Knowles and Jay A. Lin (Eds.) *Resistance and Persuasion* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2004) pp.175-192

Rik Coolsaet “Facing the Fourth Foreign Fighter Wave: What Drives Europeans to Syria, and to Islamic State? Insights from the Belgian Case,” *Egmont—Royal Institute for International Relations* (March 2016).

Martha Crenshaw "The Causes of Terrorism" *Comparative Politics,* 13:4, (1981) pp.379-399

Martha Crenshaw "How Terrorists Think: What Psychology can Contribute to Understanding Terrorism" in L. Howard (Ed.) *Terrorism: Roots, Impact Responses,* (New York: Praeger, 1992) pp. 71-80

Michael F. Dahlstrom "The Role of Causality in Information Acceptance in Narratives: An Example from Science Communication" *Communications Research,* 37(6) (2010) pp.857-875

Lorne L. Dawson and Amarnath Amarasingam "Talking to Foreign Fighters. Insights into the Motivations to *Hijrah* to Syria and Iraq", *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 40:3 (2017), pp.191-210

Natalie Delia Deckard and David Jacobson "The Prosperous Hardliner: Affluence, Fundamentalism, and Radicalization in Western European Muslim Communities," *Social Compass*, 62:3 (2015), pp. 412–433

T. A. van Dijk "Critical Discourse Analysis" in D. Schriffrin, D.Tannen and H.E. Hamilton (Eds.) *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003) pp.352-371; N. Fairclough, *Language and Power* (2nd Edition) (Harlow: Pearson, 2001)

Marwan Dwairy "Culturally Sensitive Education: Adapting Self-Orientated Assertiveness Training to Collective Minorities," *Journal of Social Issues,* 60, (2004), pp.423-436

The Economist 'Converts to Islam are likelier to radicalise than native Muslims' 01 April 2017, available at: http://www.economist.com/news/britain/21719833-britain-converts-make-up-less-4-muslims-12-home-grown-jihadists-converts (last accessed 4 February 2019)

Frazer Egerton *Jihad in the West: The Rise of Militant Salafism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011)

Ismail Raji al Faruqi *Al Tawhid: Its Implications on Thought and Life* (Virginia: International Institute of Islamic Though, 2000)

Gary A. Fine "The Sad Demise, Mysterious Disappearance, and Glorious Triumph of Symbolic Interactionism" *Annual Review of Sociology*, 19, (1993) pp. 61-87

Walter R. Fisher *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value and Action* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1987)

Lawrence Freedman *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs,* (London: Routledge, 2006)

Mark A. Gabriel *Journey Into the Mind of an Islamic Terrorist* (Florida: Frontline Press, 2006)

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, Nathaniel Barr and Bridget Moreng "The Islamic State's Global Propaganda Strategy" *International Centre for Counter-Terrorism*, 31 March 2016

Amaryllis Georges "ISIS Rhetoric for the Creation of the Ummah" TRENDS Research and Advisory 22 July 2015, http://trendsinstitution.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ISIS-rhetoric-for-the-creation-of-the-Ummah1.pdf

Richard J. Gerrig *Experiencing Narrative World: On the Psychological Activities of Reading* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1993)

Anthony Giddens *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984)

Bibi van Ginkel and Eva Entenmann (Eds.) *The Foreign Fighters Phenomenon in the European Union: Profiles, Threats & Policies*, (The Hague: ICCT, 2016)

Jonathon Githens-Mazer, Robert Lambert, Abdul-Haqq Baker, Safiyah Cohen-Baker and Zacharias Pieri "Muslim Communities Perspectives on Radicalisation in Leicester, UK" (Aarhus University: Centre for Studies in Islamism and Radicalisation, 2010)

Arnold P. Goldstein "Delinquent Gangs" in John Archer (Ed.) *Male Violence* (London: Routledge, 1994) pp.87-105

Brendan Gough, Majella McFadden and Matthew McDonald *Critical Social Psychology Second Edition,* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2013)

Melanie C. Green & Timothy C. Brock "The Role of Transportation in the Persuasiveness of Public Narratives" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 79:5 (2000) pp.701-721

Melanie C. Green and Timothy C. Brock "In the Mind's Eye: Transportation Imagery Model of Narrative Persuasion" in Green, M.C., J.J. Strange and Timothy C. Brock (Eds.) *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (pp.315-341) (New Jersey: Lawrence Erblaum Associates, 2002)

Melanie C. Green, Timothy C. Brock et al. "Understanding Media Enjoyment: The Role of Transportation into Narrative Worlds" *Communication Theory,* 14:4, (2004) pp. 311-327

Melanie C. Green "Narratives and Cancer Communication", *Journal of Communication,* 56, (2006), pp.163-183

Montserrat Guibernau “Anthony D. Smith on Nations and National Identity: A Critical Assessment” *Nations and Nationalism,* 10:1/2 (2004) pp.125-141

Stuart Hall “Signification, Representation, Ideology: Althusser and the Post-Structuralist Debates”, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication,* 2:2 (1985), pp.91-114

Stuart Hall “Encoding/Decoding” in Stuart Hall et al. *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies 1972-1979,* (London: Hutchinson, 2008)

Jeffry R. Halverson, Bennett Furlow and Steven R. Corman ‘How Islamist Extremists Quote the Qur'an’, 25 July 2012, http://csc.asu.edu/wp-content/uploads/pdf/csc1202-quran-verses.pdf

Jeffry R. Halverson, H.L. Goodall Jr. and Steven R. Corman *Master Narratives of Islamist Extremism,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan 2011)

Sadek Hamid “The Attraction of Authentic Islam: Salafism and British Muslim Youth” pp.384-402 in Roel Meijer (ed) *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Sadek Hamid “The Development of British Salafism” *ISIM Review* 21, (2008), pp.10-11

Riaz Hassan *Inside Muslim Minds* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2008)

Riaz Hassan “Modernization, Social Change and Religion: A Case Study of the Islamic Ummah” *Lahore Journal of Policy Studies,* 4:1 (2011) pp.49-58

Bernard Haykel “On the Nature of Salafi Thought and Action” in Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp.33-50

Alex Heck “Images, Visions and Narrative Identity Formation of ISIS”, *Global Discourse,* 7:2-3 (2017), pp.244-259

Thomas Hegghammer “The Rise of Muslim Foreign Fighters: Islam and the Globalisation of Jihad”, *International Security,* 35:3 (2011) p. 53-94

Thomas Hegghammer “Jihadi Salafis or Revolutionaries? On Religion and Politics in the Study of Militant Islamism” in Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam’s New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) pp.244-266

Mary J. Hickman, Lyn Thomas, Henri Nickels, and Sara Silvestri *Suspect Communities’? Counter-Terrorism Policy, the Press, and the Impact on Irish and Muslim Communities in Britain* (London: London Metropolitan University, 2011)

http://unipd-centrodirittiumani.it/public/docs/suspect-communities-report-july2011.pdf

Leslie J. Hinyard & Matthew W. Kreuter "Using Narrative Communication as a Tool for Health Behavior Change: A Conceptual, Theoretical, and Empirical Overview" *Health Education and Behavior,* 34:5 (2007) pp.777–792

Bruce Hoffman "Holy Terror: The Implications of Terror Motivated by a Religious Imperative" (Washington DC: Rand Corporation, 1993)

Patrick C. Hogan *The Mind and its Stories: Narrative Universals and Human Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003)

Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 58:4, (1995), p.255-269

John Horgan *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2005)

John Horgan "From Profiles to *Pathways* and Roots to *Routes*: Perspectives from Psychology on Radicalisation into Terrorism" *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 618:1, (2008), pp.80-94

George S. Howard "A Narrative Approach to Thinking, Cross-Cultural Psychology and Psychotherapy, 46:3 (1991) pp.187-197

Mark Huband "Radicalisation and Recuritment in Europe: The UK Case." In *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe*, edited by Magnus Ranstorp (ed.) (London: Routledge, 2010) pp. 117-43

Martin Innes, Colin Roberts, Trudy Lowe and Laurence Abbot "Hearts and Minds and Eyes and Ears: Reducing Radicalisation Risks Through Reassurance-Orientated Policing" (Cardiff: Universities Police Science Institute, 2007)

Jessica Jacobsen *Islam in Transition: Religion and Identity among British Pakistani Youth,* (London: Routledge, 1998)

Brian M. Jenkins "Building an Army of Believers: Jihadist Radicalisation and Recruitment" *Testimony Presented Before the House Homeland Security Committee, Sub-Committee on Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism Risk Assessment* (California: RAND Corporation, April 2007)

Satoshi Kanasawa and Mary Still "Why Men Commit Crimes (and Why They Desist)" *Sociological Theory,* 18:3, (2000), pp.434-447

Emmanuel Karagiannis "Defining and Understanding the Jihadi-Salafi Movement" *Asian Security,* 10:2 (2014) pp.188-198

Karim H. Karim *The Media of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2003)

Douglas Kennrick, Steven L. Neuberg & Robert B. Cialdini *Social Psychology: Goals in Interaction* (Sixth Edition) (New York: Pearson, 2014)

Gilles Kepel *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2002).

Michael King & Donald M. Taylor "The Radicalization of Homegrown Jihadists: A Review of Theoretical Models and Social Psychological Evidence," *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:4, (2011) pp.602-622

Jytte Klausen "Tweeting the Jihad: Social Media Networks of Western Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 38:1 (2015), pp.1-22

John Knefel "Everything You've Been Told About Radicalisation is Wrong" *Rolling Stone* (6 May 2013)

Joel Kotkin *The New Geography: How the Digital Revolution is Shaping the American Landscape* (New York: Random House, 2000)

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1980)

Elissa Lee & Laura Leets "Persuasive storytelling by hate groups online: Examining its effects on adolescents", *American Behavioral Scientist*, 45, (2002) pp.927-957

Charlotte Linde *Working the Past: Narrative and Institutional Memory* (Oxford: Oxford Univesity Press, 2009)

Andy Lock & Tom Strong *Social Constructionism: Sources and Stirrings in Theory and Practice,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010)

Wendy Lutrell "Working-Class Women's Ways of Knowing: Effects of Gender, Race and Class"*Sociology of Education,* 62, (1989) pp.33-46

Marc Lynch "Islam Divided Between Salafi-jihad and the Ikhwan", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism,* 33:6 (2010), pp.467-487

Shiraz Maher "The Roots of Radicalisation? It's Identity, Stupid" *ICSR Insight 23 June 2015*, (London: ICSR, 2015)

Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2016)

David Malet *Foreign Fighters: Transnational Identity in Civil Conficts,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013)

Peter Mandaville "Communication and Diasporic Islam" in Karim H. Karim *The Media of Diaspora* (London: Routledge, 2003) pp.135-147

Gabrielle Marranci *The Anthropology of Islam* (Oxford: Berg, 2008)

Ibrahim al-Mazwagi "Exclusive: the jihadi Brit who fought and died in Syria" *Channel 4 News* 21 June 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L_qXJaFQmZY

Clark McCauley & Sophia Moskalenko *Friction: How Radicalisation Happens to them and Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

Roel Meijer *Global Salafism: Islam's New Religious Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014)

Barak Mendelsohn "Foreign Fighters – Recent Trends" *Orbis* 55:2 (Spring 2011), pp.189-202, p.196

Barak Mendelsohn "God vs. Westphalia: Radical Islamist Movements and the Battle for Organising the World" *Review of International Studies* 38:03 (2012), pp.589-613, p.590

Munira Mizra, Abi Senthilkumaran & Zein Ja'far "Living Apart Together: British Muslims and the Paradox of Multiculturism" *Policy Exchange* (London: Policy Exchange, 2007)

Assaf Moghadam "The Salafi-Jihad as a Religious Ideology" *CTC Sentinel*, 1:3 (2008)

Kerry Moore, Paul Mason, and Justin Lewis, "Images of Islam in the UK: The Representation of British Muslims in the National Print News Media 2000-2008" (Cardiff: Cardiff University School of Journalism, 2008) http://www.channel4.com/news/media/pdfs/Cardiff%20Final%20Report.pdf

Asma Mustafa *Identity and Political Participation Among Young British Muslims: Believing and Belonging* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015)

Peter Neumann "Europe's Jihadist Dillema" *Survival,* 48:2 (2006), pp. 71-84, p.74-5

Peter Neumann "Introduction" in Peter Neumann, Jacob Stoil & Dina Esfandiary (Eds.) "Perspectives on Radicalisation and Political Violence" *Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence,* pp.3-7 (London: ICSR, 2008)

Peter Neumann "*Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors*" ICSR, September 2015

Peter Neumann *Radicalised: New Jihadists and the Threat to the West* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2016)

Jorgen S. Nielsen "Islam and Secular Values in Europe: From Canon to Chaos?" in Peter Cumper and Tom Lewis (eds.) *Religion, Rights and Secular Society: European Perspectives* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2012) pp.271-292

Keith Oately "A Taxonomy of the Emotions of Literary Response and a Theory of Identification in Fictional Narrative" *Poetics,* 23, (1995), pp.53-74

Keith Oately "Emotions and the Story Worlds of Fiction" in Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange & Timothy C. Brock (eds) *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erblaum, 2002)

Bouchra Oualla "Strategies of Argumentation in the Propaganda of Jihad: The Analysis of a Jihadi YouTube Video", pp. 121-140, in Rüdiger Lohlker (Ed.), *Jihadism: Online Discourses and Representation* (Vienna: University Press, 2013), pp. 123-124.

Raffaello Pantucci "The British Foreign Fighter Contingent in Syria" CTC Sentinel, 7(5), 2014, pp.17-21.

Ceri Peach 'Britain's Muslim Population: an Overview', in *Tahir Abbas (Ed) Muslim Britain: Communities Under Pressure* (London: Zed Books, 2005) pp. 18–46.

Laura A. Peracchio & Joan Meyers-Levy "Evaluating Persuasion-Enhancing Techniques from a Resource-Matching Perspective" *Journal of Consumer Research,* 24:2 (1997) pp.178-191

Charles W. Perdue, John F. Dovidio, Michael B. Gurtman & Richard B. Tyler "Us and Them: Social Categorization and the Process of Intergroup Bias" *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 59:3, (1990), pp.475-486

Pew Research Global Attitudes Project "Muslims in Europe: Economic Worries Top Concerns About Religious and Cultural Identity" 6 July 2006, http://www.pewglobal.org/files/pdf/7-6-06.pdf.

Donald E. Polkinghorne *Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences* (New York: New York Press, 1998)

Donatella della Porta *Social Movements, Political Violence and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995)

J. M. Post "When Hatred is Bred in the Bone: Psycho-Cultural Foundations of Contemporary Terrorism, *Political Psychology,* 62, (2005), pp.615-636

J. M. Post *The Mind of the Terrorist: The Psychology of Terrorism from the IRA to Al-Qaeda* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Larry Poston *Islamic Da'wah in the West: Muslim Missionary Activity and the Dynamics of Conversion to Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992)

Deborah A. Prentice, Richard A. Gerrig & Daniel A. Bailis "What Readers Bring to the Processing of Fictional Texts" *Psychonomic Bulletin Review,* 4, (1997) pp.416-420

Dina al-Raffie "Who's Hearts and Minds? Narratives and Counter-Narratives of Salafi Jihadism" *Journal of Terrorism Research,* 3:2 (2012), pp.13-31

Dina al Raffie "Social Identity Theory for Investigating Islamic Extremism in the Muslim Diaspora" Journal of Security Studies, 6:4, (2013) pp.67-91

Dafna Rand & Anthony Vassalo "Bringing the Fight Back Home: Western Foreign Fighters in Iraq and Syria," Policy Brief, *Center for a New American Security* (2014).

Magnus Ranstorp (ed.) *Understanding Violent Radicalisation: Terrorist and Jihadist Movements in Europe* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Mohammed S. Raza *Islam in Britain: Past, Present & Future* (Leicester: Volcano Press, 1993)

George Ritzer & Douglas J. Goodman *Sociological Theory* (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003)

Brooke Rogers, Kate M. Loewenthal, Christopher Alan Lewis, Richard Amlot, Marco Cinnirella & Humayan Ansari "The Role of Religious Fundamentalism in Terrorist Violence: A Social Psychological Analysis" *International Review of Psychiatry,* 19:3, (2007), pp.253-262

Royal United Services Institute *The Language of Jihad: Narratives and Strategies of Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula and UK Responses* (London: RUSI, 2011)

Olivier Roy 'Who are the new jihadis?' *The Guardian,* 13 April 2017, available at www.theguardian.com/news/2017/apr/13/who-are-the-new-jihadis (last accessed 13 February 2019)

Muhammed Saed Abdul Rahman *Islam Questions and Answers: Islamic History and Biography Vol 14* (London: MSA Publications, 2004)

Marc Sageman *Understanding Terror Networks* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004)

Hamed el-Said and Richard Barrett *Enhancing the Understanding of the Foreign Terrorist Fighter Phenomenon in Syria,* United Nations Office for Counter Terrorism, July 2015

T.R. Sarbin *Narrative Psychology: The Storied Nature of Human Conduct* (New York:

Praeger, 1986)

Robert A. Saunders "The Ummah as Nation: A Reappraisal in the Wake of the 'Cartoons Affair'" *Nations and Nationalism,* 14:2 (2008), pp.303-321

Alex P. Schmid (Ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Terrorism Research* (London: Routledge, 2011)

Alex P. Schmid "Radicalisation, De-Radicalisation, Counter-Radicalisation: A Conceptual Discussion and Literature Review" (The Hague: ICCT Research Paper, 2013)

Alex P. Schmid "Al Qaeda's Single Narrative and Attempts to Develop a Counter-Narrative: The State of Knowledge", *ICCT Research Paper*, January 2014

Seth J. Schwartz, Curtis S. Dunkel & Alan S. Waterman "Terrorism: An Identity Theory Perspective," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* 32:6, (2009) pp.537-559

Mark Sedgwick "The Concept of Radicalisation as a Source of Confusion", *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 22:4, (2010) pp.479-494

Marc Sestir & Melanie C. Green "You are What You Watch: Identification and Transportation Effects on Temporary Self-Concept", *Social Influence* 54:3 (2010) pp.272-288

Wasif A. Shadid and P. Sjoerd van Koningsveld (Eds.) *Political Participation and Identities of Muslims in Non-Muslim States* (Kampen: Kok Paros, 1996)

Andrew Silke "Cheshire-Cat Logic: The Recurring Theme of Terrorist Abnormality in Psychological Research" *Psychology, Law & Crime,* 4:1, (1998) pp.51-69

Andrew Silke "Research on Terrorism: A Review of the Impact of 9/11 and the Global War on Terrorism" in Hsinchun Chen, Edna Reid, Joshua Sinai, Andrew Silke & Boaz Ganor (Eds.) *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security* (New York: Springer, 2008) pp.27-50

Raquel de Silva and Rhys Crilley "Talk about terror in our back gardens: an analysis of online comments about British foreign fighters in Syria", *Critical Studies on Terrorism,* 10:1 (2017), pp.162-186

Robin Simcox, Hannah Stuart & Houriya Ahmed *Islamist Terrorism: The British Connection* (London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 2010)

Kristine Sinclair "Islam in Britain and Denmark: Deterritorialized Identity and Reterritorialized Agendas" *Journal of Muslim and Minority Affairs,* 28:1 (2008), pp.45-52

Michael D. Slater "Entertainment education and the persuasive impact of narratives" in M. C. Green, J. J. Strange, & T. C. Brock (Eds.), *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (pp. 157–182) (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002)

Anthony D. Smith *National Identity* (London: Penguin, 1991)

Anthony D. Smith "When is a Nation" *Geopolitics,* 7:2 (2002), pp. 5-32

Margaret Somers "The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A relational and network approach" *Theory and Society*, 23 (1994) pp.605-649

Alexander Spencer *Romantic Narratives in International Politics: Pirates, Rebels and Mercenaries* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016)

Jeffrey J. Strange "How Fictional Tales Wag Real-World Beliefs" in Melanie C. Green, Jeffrey J. Strange & Timothy C. Brock (Eds.) *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations* (New Jersey: Lawrence Erblaum, 2002) pp.263-286

Mirella Stroink "Processes and Preconditions Underlying Terrorism in Second-Generation Immigrants" *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology,* 13:3, (2007), pp.293-312

Yasir Suleiman 'Narratives of Conversion to Islam in Britain: Male Perspectives', University of Cambridge (2013), available at: http://www.cis.cam.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/narratives_of_conversion_report.pdf last accessed 15 November 2019

Henri Tajfel & John C. Turner "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behaviour" in Stephen Worschel & William G. Austin (eds.) *The Psychology of Intergroup Behaviour* (Chicago: Nelson Hall, 1986), pp.7-24

Aatish Taseer "A British Jihadist" *Prospect Magazine*, 2005, http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/features/a-british-jihadist-hassan-butt

Max Taylor & John Horgan "A Conceptual Framework for Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist" *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 8:4, (2006) pp.585-60

Abraham Tesser, Joanne V. Wood & Diederik A. Stapel (Eds.) *On Building, Defending, and Regulating the Self: A Psychological Perspective* (New York: Psychology Press)

Mike Thelwall, Olga Goriunova, Farida Vis, Simon Faulkner, Anne Burns, Jim Aulich, Amaia Mas-Bleda, Emma Stuart and Francesco D'Orazio "Chatting Through Pictures? A Classification of Images Tweeted in One Week in the UK and USA" *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology* 66:1 (2015), pp.2575-2586

Charles Tilly "Sociological Theory", *Theories of Terrorism: A Symposium* 22:1 (Mar.,

2004), pp.5-13

Daniel Trottier and Christian Fuchs (Eds.) *Social Media, Politics and the State: Protests, Revolutions, Riots, Crime and Policing in the Age of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube* (New York: Routledge, 2015)

Sherry Turkle *Alone Together: Why we Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011)

John C. Turner "Social Categorization and the Self-Concept: A Social-Cognitive Theory of Group Behaviour" in E.J. Lawler (Ed.) *Advances in Group Processes: Theory and Research* (Conneticut: JAI Press, 1985), pp.77-122

John C. Turner *Rediscovering the Social Group: A Self-categorization Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987)

Lorenzo Vidino, "European Foreign Fighters in Syria: Dynamics and Responses" *European View*, *13*:2 (2014), pp 217–224

Ruth A. Wallace & Alison Wolf *Contemporary Sociological Theory,* (New Jersey: Pearson, 2006)

Mary Anne Weaver "Her Majesty's Jihadists", 14 April 2015, *The New York Times*, https://www.nytimes.com/2015/04/19/magazine/her-majestys-jihadists.html

Christian S. Wheeler, Melanie C. Green & Timothy C. Brock "Fictional Narratives Change Beliefs: Replications of Prentice, Gerrig and Bailis (1997) with Mixed Corroboration", *Psychological Bulletin Review,* 6, 1999. pp.136-141

Quintan Wiktorowicz "The New Global Threat: Transnational Salafis and Jihad," *Middle East Policy* 8:4, (2001), pp. 18–38

Quintan Wiktorowicz "Joining the Cause: Al Muhajiroun and Radical Islam", 2004, http://www.yale-university.com/polisci/info/conferences/Islamic%20Radicalism/papers/wiktorowicz-paper.pdf

Quintan Wiktorowicz "A Genealogy of Radical Islam" *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 28:2 (2005) pp. 75-97

Quintan Wiktorowicz *Radical Islam Rising: Muslim Extremism in the West* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005)

Quintan Wiktorowicz "Anatomy of the Salafi Movement" *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 29, (2006) pp.207-239

Margo Wilson & Martin Daly "Competitiveness, Risk-Taking and Violence: The Young Male Syndrome" *Ethology and Sociobiology,* 6, (1985), pp.59-73

Charlie Winter "Documenting the Virtual Caliphate" *Quilliam Foundation,* October 2015

Lawrence Wright "The Terror Web" *The New Yorker,* 02 August 2004, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2004/08/02/the-terror-web

Ayman al-Zawahiri "Realities of the Conflict Between Islam and Unbelief" *Al-Sahab Media* (December 2006) quoted in Shiraz Maher *Salafi-Jihadism: The History of an Idea* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2016)

Aaron Zelin "*ISCR Insight European Foreign Fighters in Syria,"* ICSR Insight, 2 April 2013